

8 NEW TALES OF SUPERNATURAL WONDER

Rod Serling's
THE **TWILIGHT ZONE** Magazine

GREAT

**ROBERT
McCAMMON**

**ROBERT AND
JAY SHECKLEY**

**LUIGI
MALERBA**

**JON
COHEN**

STORIES

**SPECIAL
T.E.D. KLEIN
INTERVIEW**

**WHY
DAVID CRONENBERG'S
REMAKING 'THE FLY'**

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Rod Serling's THE TWILIGHT ZONE Magazine

October 1986

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Expect the unexpected.

Twilight Zone has always been a forum for the unexpected, but this month we may have broken new ground—with a cover that is the last word in the haute fantastic and stories that will leave you trembling with terror and laughter by turns.

Those of you who have read **Robert R. McCammon's** recent novels, or who saw TZ's rendition of his story "Nightcrawlers" on tv last year, know that McCammon is fast becoming one of the best chill masters in the business. The story in this issue will show you why. "Yellowjacket Summer" is one of those tales where atmosphere is as horrifying as happenstance, where a backwater town in Georgia is as frightening as the leering rednecks who inhabit it.

A native Alabamian, **Robert McCammon** talks about the real terrors of the South—and its beauties—in a special interview by fellow Southerner **Joe Lansdale**. He also discusses the forces that drive, and at times divide, supernatural fantasy writers and the reasons why he helped organize the Horror Writers of America.

McCammon is currently awaiting the publication of his seventh novel, *Swan Song*. Lansdale has two new books coming out: a novel called *The Magic Wagon* and *The Wild West Show!*, a collection of articles he edited on the real West and its media image.

With their comic fantasy "Julee-eeeeeeen!" **Jay and Robert Sheckley** bring us into a brighter and much more urbane world. It's a place where mechanical hearts whiz by on a conveyor belt and robots tend to think they're smarter than their fleshy counterparts. But even in the future, it seems things still have a way of going wrong.

After several years of gadding about Europe, the Sheckleys report that they are now relatively settled in Portland, Oregon. But they are hardly standing still. Bob is currently working on seven (7!) books, including *Victim Prime*, the first in a series of sequels to *The Tenth Victim*, and a new series for Tor about an American detective in Europe. In addition to working on what she calls a "radi-

oactive Christian future novel," Jay is playing in a punk rock band. Her collection of short stories, *Starships, Frog Princes and Editors: Tales of the Bizarre*, is coming out next year.

Jon Cohen has been showing us how untrustworthy commonplace things can be since he won the TZ short story contest in 1984. But he may have taken this idea to new heights in "Yard Sale," where a second-hand refrigerator opens onto boundless shelves of glowing food and a baby crib bounces with... well, you'll see.

Cohen, who lives in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania, reports that he's currently at work "pumping steroids into parts of 'Yard Sale' in the hopes that it will grow into a novel." Judging from the magic he worked in "I Don't Know Why She Swallowed the Fly" (TZ, Dec. '85) and "Ruth's Pool" (April '86), we think he just might pull it off.

For a different kind of fantasy, sink your teeth into **Luigi Malerba's** droll little nightmare "Bakararak." But beware: it not only calls up the frustration of trying to get a pompous superior to accept a new theory but also suggests that certain words, if overused, can be fattening.

Since making his literary debut in Italy in 1963, Malerba has become one of his country's foremost authors. His novels have been translated into fifteen different languages, and he has also written and directed several highly acclaimed films.

This is the first time "Bakararak," originally published in an Italian collection called *Dopo il pescecane*, has appeared in America. It was brought to our attention by poet and translator **Kathrine Jason**, who is currently translating and editing an anthology of post-war Italian fiction. Her translation of Tommaso Landolfi's short story collection *Words in Commotion and Other Stories* is due out this fall.

Although Malerba doesn't expound on the effect of words on readers, his story left us a little uneasy, especially after reading a fat pile of slush. Every once in a while, though, the threat of excessive weight gain is worth it, at least when a story like "Brahms' Wallaby" by **E.**



Robert and Jay Sheckley

W. Smith comes along. This elegant tale uncovers a number of little-known facts about the composer, like his fondness for small children and a certain furry friend.

Also new to this magazine, but not to *The Yale Review*, *The Virginia Quarterly*, or *Seventeen*, is Seattle writer **Elizabeth Monk**, who tells us that her study looks out on the "powerfully large and soft-looking" Mt. Rainier. Her story "Child of the Century" offers a haunting twist on the idea that television can have woefully unexpected effects on viewers. Its deft style and powerful imagery also suggest why earlier pieces of hers have won honorable mention in the anthology *The Best American Short Stories*.

True devotees will have met **Anita Kranitz Schlank's** work in *Night Cry*, which carried her wonderfully nasty "Special Delivery," a story about oddly dislocated fingers and ears. Her subject here is feet—unnaturally productive feet—and an ex-athlete's attempt to exploit them. A former insurance claims examiner, Schlank began writing only three years ago, shortly after she moved to Virginia with her husband and two children. But both her craftsmanship and her productivity belie the pain that she says writing causes her: "To me, writing is like childbirth, and I had to have two caesarians. My best story ideas come when I have a fever over 102 degrees."

A veteran of Iowa's famed Writer's Workshop and a former fiction teacher himself, **John Herrmann** seems to be one of the lucky few who finds writing painless. He



John Herrmann



Anita Kranitz Schlank



Joe R. Lansdale

claims that his favorite activity is travel. But when he says, "I once took a two-week train ride to Tehran up through the USSR to Kiev, then across to East Germany, and I think I could spend the rest of my life writing just about that," he suggests that travel may be only a means to an end. None of these places make their way into "Summer Will Rise," however. It grows—and grows—out of a young woman's interior fears.

On the feature side, we welcome **Tyson Blue** back to the magazine. After his great coverage of Stephen King's *Overdrive*, we were delighted he could pinch-hit on "Tube."

When he is not busy writing for *Castle Rock*, the Stephen King newsletter, or winning prizes for his nationwide reporting, Blue practices law in Georgia—"in his spare time," he says.

T.E.D. Klein hardly needs an introduction. After all, if it weren't for the editorial vision he showed as the founding editor of *Twilight Zone*, you probably wouldn't be reading this magazine. Given that and his subsequent success as a full-time writer (his bestselling novel *The Ceremonies* has just gone into its fifth printing; his short story collection *Dark Gods* has just come out in a handsome paperback), we think no one is better qualified to talk to us about breaking in. And no one may be better able to induce him to talk than his friend and colleague **Jack Sullivan**, editor of the newly released *Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*.

As things happen here in the *Twilight Zone*, Klein's reflections on

TZ's first and second generations turned out to be more fitting than we imagined. A few weeks ago, **Michael Blaine** turned the editorial reins over to an new editor and is now devoting his talents to completing a novel and a collection of short stories.

Blaine offered these parting thoughts: "Editing *Twilight Zone* was a tremendous experience, particularly the excitement of discovering new writers and presenting 'literary' fabulists to a mass audience. Judging from the letters I received, many readers enjoyed the experiment."

As of next issue, the new editor in chief will be **Tappan King**, who promises to maintain the tradition of *Twilight Zone* while publishing the best new writers as well.

Clearly he has the stuff to do it. The coauthor of the fantasy novel *Down Town* published in 1985 by Arbor House, King has published a number of short stories and articles in the science fiction and fantasy field. And he brings enormous energy and enthusiasm to the magazine, along with a fine tradition of his own. King is the grandson of Austin Tappan Wright, author of the classic *Islandia* and since 1980 has been an editorial consultant at Bantam, where he helped establish its successful science fiction and fantasy line.

We welcome him.

—Robin Bromley

A NOTE TO OUR READERS

Special thanks are owed to Robin Bromley, Editor for this issue, and Alan Rodgers, Associate Editor, for putting out this month's TZ.

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A STAMP FOR LOVECRAFT

Dear Editor:

I am writing to you to request your support in my attempt to persuade the United States Postal Service to issue a stamp in 1987 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Howard Phillips Lovecraft's death.

I am sure many of your readers have read and admired the works of H.P. Lovecraft, and it is these readers that I should like to address, for I need their support by way of letters, petitions, telegrams, and public addresses aimed at the USPS, the federal government, and most importantly, the Stamp Design Board in Washington, D.C.

The reasons for printing such a stamp are many, but one stands out especially: modern horror fiction as we know it would not exist had Lovecraft never written. Three major horror writers of this era attribute their style—and start to HPL—Robert Bloch, Stephen King, and Ramsey Campbell. Each, of course, has grown in his own direction, but the traces of HPL's style are easily seen.

One more reason for such a stamp is that Lovecraft upheld the principle of art for the sake of art in the literary field. He received a pittance for works he had invested hundreds of hours of effort in, and he refused to compromise his stringent grammarianism and use of unconventional metaphors.

Isn't it time to give H.P. Lovecraft the the recognition he deserves?

—James A. Isaacs, Jr.
President, Tristate Sciencefiction Club
Huntington, West Virginia

TZ AIN'T SF

Dear Editor:

The anomaly of Rod Serling's career was that the best-established dramatic author of his day was thought of as a science fiction television writer. At the time of TZ's conception, Serling was reputed to be all but pig-ignorant of the sf genre. His stories were about intrinsically normal people caught up in fantastic circumstances, and how their courage and spirit allowed them to overcome these bizarre situations. These were stories about people, almost slice-of-life episodes when you take away the weirdness. And still the public at

large labels *The Twilight Zone* as a 'sci-fi' tv show and lumps it in with the likes of *Lost In Space* and *Battlestar Galactica*.

And unfortunately, I believe that the editorial focus of the magazine is targeted toward the science fiction audience, to the extent that it has neglected the very essence of what allows it to exist in the first place. Whether this was intentional or not is beyond my capacity to speculate, except perhaps to say that it must be necessary to pander to this specialized group in order to maintain satisfactory sales. You know better than I do.

In any case, it's my feeling that TZ, the magazine, no longer draws its strength from TZ, the television program. Recapture that essence, that spirit which allows us to defeat our fears and prejudices, that sensation which the notion of a *Twilight Zone* magazine first conjured in my mind—and you will recapture this part of your audience.

—Bruce Reynolds
St. Ann, Missouri

We ourselves are hardpressed to name any science fiction published recently in these pages. But sf is difficult to define. In fact, we think your letter raises some important questions—questions like "What makes us call one story science fiction and another horror, or high fantasy?" and "Can, after all these years, the Twilight Zone tradition finally be defined?"

Both T.E.D. Klein and Robert McCammon offer some answers in their interviews this issue. Yet the case is hardly closed. The best readers and writers have been asking these questions for years. And we hope our stories will prompt them to continue.

HE'S HEARD ENOUGH

In the last "Letters" section (August 1986) one reader wrote in saying how teenagers seem to love sex and violence. Come on, now, at least assume some of us are mature. Anyone who isn't accustomed to the parts of the human anatomy by age fourteen has either been locked in a closet all his/her life, or has true problems. I find it hard to believe that sex can be thought disgusting.

As for profanity, come on, fellas. I may only be 16, but I find that profanity (if used sparingly) can make a story realistic and (most of the time) more humorous. Tell me honestly, which is more realistic: If a person walks along a dark, path, and suddenly, the alien jumps out and says something like boo. What would the person do? Say, "Golly whillikers," and try to reason with the thing, or would the person yell at the top of his/her lungs some obscenity and promptly run for the hills? Somehow, I think the latter would happen. I enjoy TZ the way it is, and I have had it with people saying this magazine is disgusting. It is far from that. It's enjoyable reading material. Don't change a letter!

I have taken all of this up to Yuggoth, and I will not stand to see my favorite magazine nailed to the wall by a few self-appointed purifiers!

—Charles O'Dale
Nyarlatohotep

Golly whillikers! This is strong stuff, Charles, but your point about realistic speech is well taken. Anyone care to rebut?

NYUCK NYUCK NYUCK

Dear Editor:

I really enjoyed the story "Stooges" in your June 1986 issue. The author has a terrific imagination. Please relay this to him. I also agree with whoever wrote the letter "A Modest Proposal." An issue every month would be nice, unless you would have to sacrifice the quality of the magazine.

—Brian McIntock
North Attleboro, Massachusetts

Thanks, Brian. Let's just hope the magazine never grows quite as fast as Zebrowski's self-generating Stooges.

CORRECTION

We like doing things in a big way around here. That's why we put the big gaff in the last issue up front and in color on the cover, where we boasted that we had a special report on John Cameron's *Aliens*. His name is James, of course. And ours on the set of *Aliens* is mud. Help dig us out: go see the movie. We will—many times.

Hard-boiled futures, character redemption, and derring-do.

When a new writer pulls three of the big awards in science fiction—the Hugo, the Nebula, and the Philip K. Dick—and deservedly so, it would seem natural to gather up his previous magazine work and print it in book form. This is what has happened with William Gibson, author of the prize-winning *Neuromancer* and now of **Burning Chrome** (Arbor House, \$15.95).

Burning Chrome contains ten stories ranging from 1977 to 1985. Three are collaborations: "Red Star, Red Winter," with Bruce Sterling, who also contributes a preface to the book; "The Belonging Kind," with John Shirley; and "Dogfight," with Michael Swanwick. I don't know how these collaborations were written, but their surface texture shows Gibson's stylistic hand: short declarative sentences, absence of relative clauses, "But" for a paragraph or sentence opener, floating participial modifiers, and so on. ("Red Star, Red Winter" displays them the least and has the least snap of the three stories.) These points of style, of course, are part of Gibson's hard drive.

Of Gibson's solo stories two, are outstanding: "The Winter Market" and the brilliant "Burning Chrome." These, like a couple of the other stories, are set more or less in the world of *Neuromancer*, a future sited where runaway technology, computerization, cybernetics, Nipponization, advanced neurosurgery, colossal trade entities, information as wealth, and the life-and-death morality of a cat fight hold sway. Anything goes in this world, or almost anything, for there are still personal loyalties.

Gibson's ruthless future exemplifies a twenty-first century version of Spencer's survival of the fittest. The survivors may not propagate, since Gibson has little or nothing to say on this topic, but they survive as individuals until faster, more wily beasts turn up at superior consoles.



Rats, however, nibble around the edges, and it is mostly with these rats that Gibson concerns himself.

The parallels with our own world are obvious. Like Raymond Chandler, Gibson is intrigued by the romanticism of crime. The night-club owner, sleek and suave, but corrupted and corrupting in a dozen ways, was a central symbol of the older hard-boiled world. In Gibson's future a comparable figure is the razor-fingered young woman who is both killer and protectress, a handy version of the traditional castrating mother-lover.

"Burning Chrome," in some ways the showpiece of this collection, is the closest in setting to *Neuromancer*. It describes, beautifully, a computer raid in a setting of rogues and scoundrels as vicious as an eighteenth-century London Alsatia. The raid is daring, for the victim is deadly, and either the raiders or the horrible freak Chrome will die as a result of it. But the rewards are great, and good human psychology is involved.

In the "Winter Market," Gibson describes a future entertainment world where fortunes are made by tapping and publishing high-emotion unconscious mental processes—much as we publish records or tapes. The narrator is caught in a love-hate relationship with the dying Lise, whose mind figures, canned as *King of Sleep*, are a sales sensation. The story ends with an important matter of definitions. When the personality of the dead Lise has been put into a mainframe, is it the real Lise? The narrator waits in trepida-

tion for a phone call from her in an ending less cerebral than is customary with Gibson.

Independent of the *Neuromancer* world or its anticipations is "The Gernsback Continuum," which is set in the 1980s, our world. A freelance photographer undertakes the task of photographing the surviving art deco architectural monstrosities of southern California. Perpetually intruding in his vision is the fantasy world of the old Frank R. Paul illustrations for Hugh Gernsback's *Amazing and Wonder*—both the unworkable expressionist technology and its social implications for a too-ordered world. Gibson's insights are unusual and the story would be outstanding if it had been handled with a light touch. Unfortunately, Gibson attacks it with a sledgehammer and a pneumatic drill.

Of the three collaborations only "Dogfight" with Swanwick is noteworthy; it is up to the solo stories in quality. The story of a grifter in a hi-cybe future, it is also a story of human frailties as a loner pays the penalty for crooked success in a game world of mentally controlled hologram dogfights a la Red Baron. A fine story.

Burning Chrome demonstrates, a major talent in science fiction. Gibson is a writer of great formal strength, creativity, and originality. His vile futures are as full and convincing as anything ever done. But thus far he has worked mostly in a very narrow range, with a single subject matter and a single style. The futuristic hard-boil is not always appropriate, as was the case with "The Gerns-

back Continuum," and it palls after a while. A reader would like a little less hard-sell pressure, a little more deftness, and a lighter touch. Despite this general criticism, *Burning Chrome* is certainly a book to own.

When I finished *The Coming of the Quantum Cats* by Frederik Pohl (Bantam, \$3.50), I turned back to the libel disclaimer at the front of the book—the thing about resemblances to persons living or dead. And I wondered a little. Especially since the U.S. Supreme Court has just adjointed the concept of libel so that a plaintiff suing a news medium now has to prove falsity. This shifts the burden of proof away from the defendant, where it used to be. Now, I wondered, could a real-life Jerry Brown in our world sue Pohl and Bantam because of uncomplimentary things that Pohl has said about a time-clone Jerry Brown in an alternate universe? Would there be

"standing" in the legal sense?

This all emerges in *The Coming of the Quantum Cats*, an unnecessarily coy title for a fairly rough adventure thriller. The story is built on the old idea of parallel worlds splitting off from one another. Pohl, who has taken more pains in providing reasonableness than most users of the gimmick, postulates that each time a subatomic event takes place, its opposite also occurs, thus forming an infinite mass of parallel universes, each of which thereupon evolves independently, with no preestablished harmony to control them. A matter of resonance links certain worlds that have not gone too far apart.

The action is concerned mostly with four such paratime earths, all 1983, but none of them ours. There is Alpha, ahead of the others scientifically; Gamma, a militaristic world, where an equipotent U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. are itching for a chance to

blow each other up; Epsilon, a now peaceful world, where the Chinese and Russians have just about eliminated each other and the U.S.A. is supreme; and Tau, a horrible police state with a strong Moslem overlay in folkways and laws. (If you need a mnemonic device, the four worlds together spell G-A-T-E.) On Alpha a technique has been developed for opening passages through to other worlds. One of the Alpha scientists, however, defects and escapes to Gamma, where the United States put him to work building a doorway for a surprise attack on the U.S.S.R. via Epsilon.

The invasion is a clever idea, but there are complications. When the interuniversal barriers are pierced, there are side-effects, random factors that toss people and things arbitrarily from one paratime to another, resulting in events like those that Charles Fort wrote up in

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Richard Christian Matheson

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TZ

the 1920s and early 30s: mysterious disappearances, odd appearances in the sky, inexplicable sounds, apports, and so on. These side effects turn up in the fascist universe Tau, which is dragged into the mess.

Against this background Pohl has set himself a difficult task, one that usually does not befall an author of stories of derring-do. This is the problem of characterizing identical yet different men and women from the various paratimes. Thus, there are four Dominic De Sotas: Nicky, a beaten-down small businessman from Tau; Senator Dom, a capable lawyer and politician from Epsilon; Captain De Sota of the ruthless armed forces of Gamma; and Dr. De Sota, a member of the team that developed the paratime doorways. (Pohl's types, oddly enough, fit the classical Indian caste system: Nicky, *sudra*; Dom, *vaisha*; Captain, *kshatriya*; Doctor, *brahmin*.)

Along with the four De Sotas are three variants of Nyra—Nyra of Epsilon, a concert violinist and mistress to the senator; Sgt. Nyra, a soldier-reservist in the Gamma army; and Agent Nyra of the F.B.I. on Tau, a reformed thief turned sadistic interrogator. There are also variants of Josef Stalin's grandson, who is variously a Russian ambassador, a coman, and the defecting scientist. Differentiating them all, yet holding them steady, is a formidable task that Pohl does well.

The wheels spin and begin to mesh as the paratimes come into contact. Invasions are mounted; resistance strikes back; paratime disturbances create nuisances, and the near-identities meet and interact.

But then, toward the end of the book, comes what a reader might variously call a quantum leap, a *deus ex machina*, or just a cheater—and everything is brought to a standstill and shifted into a different frame of reference. Aesthetically, Pohl's trick breaks classical rules by bringing in new material in order to evade a resolution in previous terms, and offers to the more important characters chances for development and happiness—for a time.

What to think about *The Coming of the Quantum Cats* as a whole? It's middle-level Pohl, by no means the

major social Pohl, but it's good commercial work. If you like ingenious adventure thrillers that count technically as sf because of a couple of background postulates, you'll probably enjoy this one.

Suzy McKee Charnas's *Dorothea Dreams* (Arbor House, \$16.95) might be described as a novel about cancer. Cellular cancer is killing Ricky Maulders and is driving him away from his British home and family; spiritual cancer is stonewalling Dorothea Howard, an artist, into an energy-consuming project; and social cancer in the Chicano slums of Albuquerque is distorting lives with poverty, false values, and inescapable death. Each cancer drains vitality and strength.

Charnas tells her story in two alternating narrative sequences that meet in a common resolution. I wouldn't call her technique fictional counterpoint, since one subplot is much stronger than the other—a sort of steel-drum bang against a set of virginals—but it is a form of developmental contrast. Associated with each subplot is a theme: first, character redemption by revelation and trial, secondly, amelioration of social evils by activism, even if the activism is of the wrong sort. The two subplots meander along, each to its devices, until a crisis shocks them together.

In the first subplot Dorothea Howard, a more talented artist than she herself realizes, has settled down to a vegetative semiseclusion in artists' Taos and is devoting her life to decorating a rock outcropping with fun-junk. This stone wall—admittedly beautiful, though a dead end—symbolizes her life: a stasis patched up with epoxy glue and kitsch.

Dorothea, besides being pestered by her daughter and a would-be agent, has another problem. She is bothered by repetitive, sequential nightmares that have something to do with French history—crowds, cocked hats, atrocities, and a mysterious robbed figure. The reader will get the situation in about two seconds, but Dorothea does not, although she "once knew all this stuff forward and backward." The dreams culminate in a rather puzzling long letter from the figure, taken down somnambulistical-

ly by Dorothea. In the letter, the "ghost," a Frenchman who has survived the Terror, Napoleon, and the Restoration, urges his son to keep his nose clean politically; the letter also reveals an act of despicable treachery, when the "ghost" betrayed one of his son's friends to the police. Dorothea and Ricky recognize the ghost as a shifty time-server, but are baffled by it all.

The second subplot, which is just as vivid and colorful as Dorothea's dreams are pallid and monochrome, focuses on a slum neighborhood in Albuquerque, where real estate speculators are blockbusting, forcing out the Chicanos so that the street on which the Cantu family lives can be gentrified into quaint Hispanic villas for rich gringos. Some of the street dwellers sell out for eastern gold; others decide to fight against the *gringueria*, organizing a neighborhood association, blocking off the street, and holding rallies.

Central are the Cantus, a very well characterized pair: Roberto, a stupid young thug who is greatly concerned about his macho rating with the local strong-arm men, and his younger sister Blanquita, a coniving little bitch who uses her severe asthma as emotional blackmail, though on an unconscious level.

The fun now starts. The Cantus are implicated in a riot in which a man was accidentally killed by the police. Roberto, though really innocent, is a wanted man. After hiding out for a time, they decide to escape. To pass through the police cordon around town, they join a group of young artists visiting Dorothea, highjack the bus, and take Dorothea *et al.* as hostages.

The heart of the novel now emerges: activism and mutual help. Dorothea can save (in the largest sense) the Cantus, and the Cantus can drag her down from her kitschy styrofoam tower. And so it happens. One of the results of this integration, however, is so fantastic that I cannot swallow it, even though I can take ghosts, possible cryptomnesia, or reincarnation in my fictional stride. This is the political finale: the blockbusters are caught, the crooked cops and politicians are put on the carpet, and

(continued on page 16)

Three Robert Bloch retreads and Ramsey Campbell's *The Hungry Moon*.

The author of hundreds of stories and about a score of novels, Robert Bloch is one of the best known—and most admired—writers of suspense and supernatural fiction. When his books go out of print, they become instant collectors' items. Scream Press has now issued three of Bloch's suspense novels that have been generally unavailable for twenty years and more, in a large attractive volume: **Unholy Trinity** (Scream Press, P.O. Box 8531, Santa Cruz CA 95061, \$25). The three—*The Scarf*, *The Dead Beat*, and *The Couch*—have in common protagonists who are young, handsome, and homicidal.

On the purely formalistic level of style and structure, these are competent novels and better. *The Scarf*, Bloch's first novel, published originally in 1947, is competent, only. It concerns a man compulsively led to murder women who have had the poor judgment to become involved with him; usually he strangles them with a maroon scarf, a memento of a sexually traumatizing episode.

The story is told in the first person by the protagonist, Dan Morley, and traces his development from ad man to successful writer, from Chicago to New York to Hollywood, from maladjusted teens to psychotic twenties. The trouble is that Morley's narrative suggests he is much too self-aware and emotionally stable to be capable of the uncontrollable rages that lead him to kill, and his final, total breakdown is absolutely unconvincing.

The memoirs of a psycho sex killer must have delivered a lot more punch in those less-jaded days. In fact, in its time the book was mildly revolutionary. Now, however, the novel is most interesting as an artifact of pulp sensibility of the forties. Scream Press has added a chapter, a dream sequence, previously deleted from the original, and Bloch unfortunately has seen fit to "update" the novel, creating a certain dissonance between story and style, on the one hand, and the more contemporary language and imagery, on the other.

The Dead Beat, originally pub-



Robert Bloch

lished in 1960 as a follow-up novel to Bloch's magnum opus, *Psycho*, is a far better book. It's the story of Larry Fox, an amoral jazz pianist who, motivated by greed and a screw-the-other-guy attitude, conceives a blackmail scheme that eventually blows up in his face—literally. Fox is certainly one of the nastiest characters in popular fiction—not a psychopath but an out-and-out sociopath—and we can scarcely wait for him to get his richly deserved comeuppance. The story builds up a good deal of tension derived naturally from Fox's character.

The last novel, *The Couch*, was a novelization of the movie (for which Bloch did the screenplay), published as a paperback original in 1962. As novelizations go, this is one of the best and easily stands on its own. It's a simple, fast-moving story of a very disturbed young man, Charles Campbell, who confuses his psychiatrist with his hated father and constructs a bizarre plot to murder the shrink while diverting attention away from himself. Unlike Dan Morley, it's easy to believe Charles is psychotic. His paranoia and confusion are never very far from the surface.

As well done as these books may be, particularly the latter two, there are aspects to them that make them, for me, unpleasant. Particularly offputting is a pervasive misanthropy, which often extends way be-

yond the viewpoint of the protagonist. A passage from *The Couch* is a case in point:

Faggots and "rough trade" may flaunt their deviation. Winos and jugheads stumble unconcernedly through the streets. The moochers and grifters go about their panhandling unabashed. Evangelists openly issue warnings of doom on soapboxes at the top of their lungs, and the lunatic fringe parades past, exhibiting every eccentricity of dress or speech without self-consciousness or restraint.

Or take this speech from the end of *The Dead Beat*, in which a character (with whom Bloch evidently is in sympathy) draws parallels between the criminally sociopathic Larry Fox and the Beats:

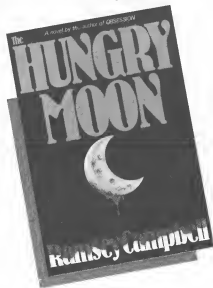
"There's more to the so-called Beat Generation than sitting around in coffeehouses digging cool sounds, or spouting poetry to music. Being Beat has nothing to do with writing books or making angry noises. They did all that when we were young, in Greenwich Village, on the campuses. Being Beat is simply an attitude toward life which no amount of sophisticated rationalization can cover up. An attitude of *me-first*, of *anything-for-kicks*. Larry had it. Or it had *him*. He may have been an extreme case, but I think the Beats can be characterized best by one of their own phrases. Sick-sick-sick."

This is a gratuitous slap at people of whom Bloch has not the most elementary understanding (which accounts, to some extent, for his tin ear when employing Beat argot). Bloch went out of his way to insert this stupid polemic.

If I had only encountered Bloch in these novels, I wouldn't like him at all. But Bloch is famous for his warmth and generosity and sense of humor. These qualities are evident in his writings for fanzines, some of which have been collected in **Out of My Head**, a small volume from the NESFA Press (Box G, MIT Branch P.O., Cambridge, MA 02139-0910; \$15.00). This very enjoyable book

contains twenty-two pieces, including appreciations of Fritz Lang, Henry Kuttner, Bob Tuck, and Forrest J. Ackerman, brief essays on Lovecraft, convention-going, writing pulp stories, and much else.

Stephen King may be one of the most successful writers of all time, but Ramsey Campbell, although not very well known outside the horror field, is, I think, the better writer, and I prefer his work. Even though King can hold a reader (this reader included) like nobody else and he is simply without peer as a storyteller, the voice King writes in gives the impression of an overgrown adolescent intent on showing that he's just one of the guys. Campbell isn't out to prove anything. His style is rich and resonant and illuminates the story more than the storyteller.



Nevertheless, I must admit that Campbell's latest novel, *The Hungry Moon* (Macmillan, \$17.95), occasionally drags. Campbell's shorter works have an impact missing from his novels: some of his stories are genuinely scary; but his novels only rarely move me beyond a feeling of unease.

This novel, Campbell's seventh and one of his most ambitious, takes place in the fictional Northern England town of Moonwell. Small and isolated, it fairly breeds parochialism and prejudice. To this place comes a fundamentalist preacher

who calls himself Godwin Mann (get it?), and Moonwell and its inhabitants provide fertile soil for his message of intolerance.

Campbell captures the meanness of spirit and the shabbiness of place in images and irony worthy of Orwell:

"Come in then," Brian said distractedly, jutting his jaw as he led her to the kitchen where he was preparing dinner. Dried-up baked beans and sausages sputtered in a pan, soggy chips blackened under the grill above which a new plaque said "God Lives Here."

And when Mann descends into a pit said to be inhabited by an ancient Moon god once worshipped by the Druids, the sexual undercurrent of Campbell's images lends an eerie mixture of sex and menace to the scene:

The light seemed to make the cave gape wider, brought the charred slopes lurching forward as if the low swollen clouds were forcing them. "He's going down to pray," June murmured to Andrew, "to make this into a holy place."

This little show is Mann's undoing—for there really is something down there. And when Mann re-emerges, it is not Mann, but the other, in the flesh of Mann.

As the evil creature plays on the basest feelings of the townsfolk, the oppressive atmosphere thickens, reflected in the black clouds massing over Moonwell, bringing darkness and an impenetrable isolation. No longer can anyone leave, as roads lead into an absolute darkness, or back to town. The outside world has forgotten the place. It is no longer on the map.

From here on, the tension and dread are almost palpable, punctuated by a few truly frightening moments (the most memorable: the view through the keyhole into Mann's hotel room). At the same time, the pace slows, however, and a certain languor dilutes the suspense. Still, even in the least of his work (which this is not), Campbell is head and shoulders above just about everybody else around. ■

(continued from page 12)

things look good for the street. I don't believe it.

A story about spiritual redemption, like *Dorothea's Dreams*, is admittedly very difficult to write, since it calls for a mechanism that carries conviction. For Dorothea, the mechanism is the "ghost" and his sorry behavior in the past, buttressed by the opportunity offered by the Cantu rebellion. For the Cantu it is (indirectly) the breaking of bad life patterns and (directly) Dorothea's sudden compulsion to commit self-sacrifice for the hostages held by Roberto.

Unfortunately, for me, all this does not work. The characterization suffers badly along the route, and one has the impression that Charnas has adjusted the personalities to the story, rather than vice versa. Nor is Dorothea a strong enough situation to hold up Roberto. After a while, thinking the novel over, I began to wonder: Wouldn't the story have been more consistent and more convincing without the supernaturalism, as a psychological novel; better yet, focused on the Cantu and their friends?

Charnas never exactly identifies the haunting, if such it was. Dorothea and Ricky, though, apparently with the author's approval, decide that the dream manifestations were produced by a previous incarnation of Dorothea's, which had flubbed its life. They believe that there must be some sort of moral regulatory mechanism permitting her to recoup her losses from Restoration France—or, otherwise put, her bad karma.

This leaves too much up in the air. If Dorothea and the Frenchman both exist, as implied, what is left to be reincarnated? There must be something beyond them, but what? Also, is foreknowledge implied? How is the knowledge of futurity to be reconciled with Dorothea's apparent free will?

As the reader has undoubtedly figured out by now, I would consider *Dorothea Dreams* an uneven work. It is certainly not up to *The Vampire Tapestry*. Yet I don't mean to damn it completely, for it has many good touches, even if I think it would have been a better book without Dorothea's dreams. ■

The desktop revolution, or move over Citizen Kane.

It's a little-known fact that the era of desktop publishing actually began in the sixteenth century. Some five hundred years ago, shortly after Johann Gutenberg perfected movable type, a Venetian printer named Aldus Manutius began mucking about with actual type designs themselves, in the interests of creating cheap, compact books for poverty-stricken scholars. He gave us such innovations as italics (*like this*), and bold face (**like this**), as well as other forms of visual emphasis—like dingbats (☆*~+) and punctuation!!!

Suddenly anyone with a letter press, a pair of tweezers, and an awful lot of time could be his own desktop publisher (assuming he had an awfully large desk.)

Nothing much new happened in publishing for the next four hundred years. Then, in 1886, Ottmar Mergenthaler invented the Linotype machine, eliminating the need for tweezers. Type could be set automatically at the touch of a keyboard. But everything else still had to be done by hand. Galleys had to be cut up. Headlines had to be set sepa-

publisher.

One person can eliminate the expensive step-by-step phases of the print shop. One person can create publications that look just as good as the ones on your newsstand.

Let me give you an idea of how this system cuts production costs. As faculty advisor to the student newspaper at a college in New York City, I publish a sixteen-page tabloid (3,000 copies) once every quarter. Our production costs break down as follows: typesetting articles (\$400), designing and pasting up the galleys (\$500), and finally actual printing (\$300). Total cost: \$1,200.

But with the new desktop system, students could type articles right into the computer. Then they could use the desktop software to do all the lay out and design right on the computer screen (no waxes or exacto knives). And then I could send my disk to my printer who will finish the job. The result? I have eliminated all expenses except the printing. And now the total cost is only—\$300!

Most desktop publishing today is done on the Macintosh because its advanced graphics capabilities and "mouse"-driven commands allow for easy manipulations of text and art. The Cadillac of desktop publishing software is Page Maker, also from Macintosh (\$500).

Once you type your story into the Page Maker, you will become drunk with power. Using a mouse (a few simple clicks), you can easily change your typeface and point size; you can change headlines from italics to boldface without going through complicated commands. Each time you click the mouse, your copy is simply "poured" into the columns, with perfectly justified margins. And the quality of the type is stunning.

During a recent demonstration, I watched as the copy appeared on



the screen and it looked real! The headlines were solid Times Roman just like a newspaper. And what you see on the screen is what you get on the page. The lettering is typeset quality. (In fact, it's so good, it's frightening. It gives one visions of becoming a Citizen Kane.)

What's more, the new programs give you access to graphics. With Page Maker you can also draw boxes, circles, ovals, or any other shape to mark off space to fill in photographs. By using Apple's MacDraw (\$200) or MacPaint (\$125), you can actually "draw" or "paint" on the screen, creating line art for your stories.

When you're finished, you can turn your Mac disk over to any suitably equipped printer for final production. But if you really want to do it up right, you can become your own printer as well! For the hefty initial investment of about \$5,000, you can connect your Mac to the new LaserWriter Plus, and have access to more than thirty-five different typefaces as well as *italic*, **bold**, and even dingbats!!! All printed out at an astonishing rate of eight pages a second for a fraction of the cost of conventional printing. And you know what? You really can do it all on the top of a conventional desk!

With a little imagination, your layouts can soon be as good as your prose, and your publication as professional as any on the market. (Hmm. Come to think of it, maybe you *shouldn't* get a Macintosh for desktop publishing. We've got all the competition we can handle already!) ■

ITC Avant Garde

ITC Bookman

Courier

ITC Dingbats ☆*~+ ✱❖■❖❖

Helvetica

Helvetica Narrow

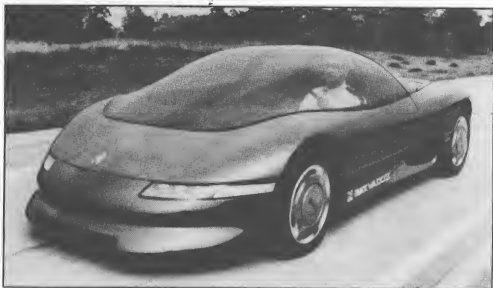
New Century Schoolbook

Palatino

Symbol Σμυβολ

ately. Pictures had to be sized photographically. And then the whole mess had to be painstakingly cut and pasted on a drafting board with exacto knives and hot wax.

That's all changed now because of a high-tech mating of two state-of-the-art technologies: Xerography and the personal computer—specifically, the Apple Macintosh. Now, anyone who can afford the new MacPlus (\$2,599) can become his or her own



DREAM MACHINE

Getting back to the future at Buick Motors began in 1953 with the Wildcat, a fiberglass fantasy encasing a 188-horsepower V-8 fact. The 1985 model proves the future is just a prototype. It shaves two cylinders off the 231-cubic-inch engine for an extra 42-horse power and delivers two-thirds of them from behind the driver's seat to the rear axle. The port-sequential, fuel-injected heart of this machine actually propels you to whatever lies ahead.

Although still a one-of-its-kind concept car, the Wildcat has been bred for functional purposes. Its four-speed automatic transmission and clutchless manual shift leaves gear selection largely to the driver, while an onboard computer prevents premature downshifting and helps the anti-lock braking system keep riders intact during sudden stops. Four-wheel drive dissipates the high-speed torque that only the

white-knuckled know.

The Wildcat's design integrates art and engineering with both its unique exposed-engine casing and a canopy molded into fender and windows, which also trickles down into the sculpted interior. Standard-gauge readouts are in the stationary steering wheel hub, and gear selection, G-force, electrical compass, and tire-pressure readouts are conveniently located on dash displays or in the lucky driver's line of sight.

True, you may never find the Wildcat's 172.75" x 72.78" x 43.7" carbon fiber and glass pelt in your own garage. It's not for sale. But still, it is the stuff dreams are made of. For Wildcat information, call public relations at the Buick Motor Division: (313) 236-5844.

TALKMAN

Sure, you're coordinated enough to walk and talk at the same talk. But how many times have you been doing just that when

the phone cord reached critical extension, sending the phone crashing to the floor, or the receiver boomeranging back to the wall? Now there's a way to avoid all that. Active souls at the end of their tether with conventional telecommunications can consider investing in WICOM's Walk n' Talk, the world's smallest telephone.

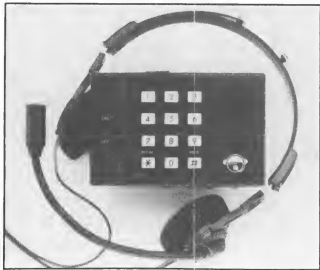
Walk n' Talk is not a cellular phone, but a fully operable 4½" x 2" x 1" modular unit about the size of a pack of

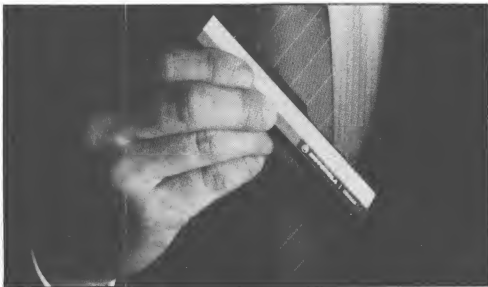
cigarettes. Its fifteen-foot line cord and standard jack plug into any phone outlet for both incoming and outgoing calls. Weighing in at a quarter of a pound, it can be clipped onto a belt or carried in a shirt pocket, and its earphone headset and flexible microphone arm free your hands for activities like working at a stove that usually cause regular telephones to recoil in surprise.

The Walk n' Talk, which sells for \$69.95, comes in a variety of fashion colors, making coordination with your wardrobe a snap. And in addition to giving you push-button dialing, an on-off switch, and last-number redial, it even let's you put calls on hold when you're on the go. For further information, call (818) 708-1881.

DISCREET BEEP

The problem with beeper paging is that you really can't tell whether the call that just made you drop everything is really important, or just another nudge from that





pesky encyclopedia salesman you've been avoiding all week. With Motorola's new Sensor Numeric Display Pager, though, you can tell the emergency from the intrusion; you'll know both whom to call and with how much urgency.

The Sensor pager gives you all the vital, vital statistics on its 24-digit capacity LCD. And if you cannot answer a call right away, the pen-sized radio pager will store up to five messages. As calls come in, old messages are overwritten and updated, while duplicate messages from a persistent caller are moved into a primary memory location. It also has the capacity to save up to three memory positions from being overwritten until you turn the pager off. And, if you're particularly fussy about who has access to you, four "mail drop" memory locations can be keyed to specific phone numbers so that each receives information—stock market updates, ball scores—from that

source only.

The Sensor's dual function tone has two dress modes so that you can receive messages at two different ports of call. And if you're sensitive about blaring beeps that single you out in restaurants or theaters, you can set a silent alert that will simply store the message for later, or request the single, subtle beep designed for those who believe discretion is the better part of callers. The number for Motorola information is (800) 367-2346 x272.

COUSTEAU CAM

Know how those hand-held camcorders made taking video pictures possible anywhere? In the desert. On the mountains. And even at those most treacherous of locations, the young child's birthday party.

Well, now you can also film your next voyage to the bottom of the sea. With the introduction of its Handycam Marine Pack, Sony Corporation makes it possible for

would-be Cousteaus to pack an 8-mm camcorder along with snorkel, faceplate, and flippers.

The submersible Marine Pack is made of plastic and glass that seals with special buckles and a rubber-ring clamp system that will keep the video unit as dry at 40 meters beneath sea level as it was at the last landlubbers' picnic. And record-

and-stop functions for the Handycam are operable from outside the unit casing at fingertip touch.

And no, you don't have to rely on a fish-eye lens: a wide conversion lens minimizes underwater distortion, and a piezoelectric microphone makes even underwater sound recording possible. Weighing eight pounds including ballast weight, and measuring 11.80" x 10.25" x 10.45", the Handycam Marine Pack is not much more unwieldy than the camcorder itself.

At a retail price of \$999.95, this precision video unit has only one drawback: it will make it difficult for you to ever tell an unprovable fish story again. For more information, call Sony: (201) 930-1000. ■



EARTH COOKIES

In the fall of 1984 a geologist was called to an isolated ranch in northern-central Washington state. It was a bleak place, cold and spooky. And there the geologist saw it: a key-hole shaped slab of earth.

In fact, according to Stephen Malone, a geophysicist at the University of Washington, it reportedly

plateau to round up grazing cattle hadn't seen the hole a month earlier. Nor were there any bulldozer tracks on the ground or scorched earth to suggest a violent explosion. People who've seen the slab report that it looks as if it had been cut out of the ground by some gigantic cookie cutter. And hence this phenomenon has become known as the

ground motion." (One explanation that seemed very likely was that a concentration of underground methane gas blew up. But that was ruled out since the gas is rare in the area.)

Malone feels the "cookies" may be a hoax. "There are two possibilities," he says. "One could be the logging company nearby has a big helicopter to move this ground after

MIND— DOES IT MATTER?

Consider this:

You're having brunch with your date. Suddenly, he or she lunges across the table and smacks you in the face. "Why!?" you cry out.

But your date looks confused, and apologizes: "I don't know what came over me."

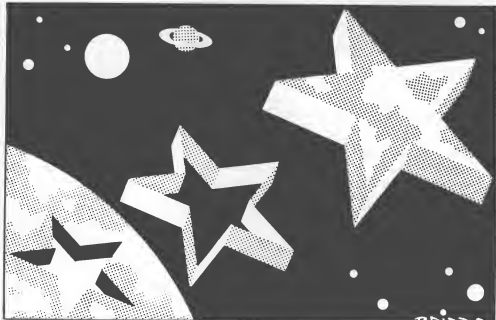
Of course, you know this is nonsense. Right? You tell him or her, "But you must have thought about it before smacking me. Right?" Wrong.

New research by neuroscientists has yielded a provocative finding: Until now, we have long thought that the exercise of our will (the decision to smack or do the simplest actions) always followed some logical pattern. We have always believed that we would make decisions to act and then that decision would be passed along to the brain, which would trigger the action. Right?

Wrong.

According to a report in the April issue of *The Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, Benjamin Libet, a neuro-physiologist at the University of California, found that brain activity appears to come before voluntary acts. In other words, the new sequence is: first our brain goes into action and then we experience a decision to act, followed by the act!

For example, Dr. Libet conducted a study measuring the brain activity of volunteers as they moved a finger spontaneously. And he found that (on the



weighed more than one and a half tons. And not far from the key-shaped slab (73 feet) there was a key shape hole—leaving no doubt where the earth slab originated from. And even though Malone didn't visit the actual sight (he's seen pictures), he is one of many scientists who have been called on to answer the question: What cut out and moved this huge slab of earth?

Apparently, ranch hands who roamed the remote windswept

Malone, an earthquake expert, says he was called on to help explain this phenomenon since there had been a quake nine days prior to the discovery of the "cookie." But Malone doesn't think this quake could have caused a shaking strong enough to produce this kind of effect.

"The event was 20 miles away," he explains, "and it was only a magnitude 3.0 on the Richter scale. It was barely felt and this phenomenon would require a stronger

they cut it out, which is pretty unlikely. But more likely it was probably done on the ground. Someone may have some sort of machine and if the temperature is cold enough, the ground is frozen and hard enough, they can drive in and out without leaving any tire marks. But I don't know why they'd do it . . ."

Ultimately, Malone claims that most scientists don't take this "Earth Cookie" seriously because they think it's probably a hoax.

Maybe.

average) brain activity began about a third of a second before the volunteers noted their decision to move a finger.

Consequently, Dr. Libet's interpretation may indicate that what we normally think of as "free will" is actually a misconception. That is, it seems, activity of the brain may make decisions for the mind before we are aware of them.

However, Libet also found that there is time to cancel that decision during the one tenth of a second between your awareness of a decision and the action itself. So tell the date who smacked your face there is still no excuse. Right?

Right!

FUTURE FLUSH

I have friends who consider themselves real journalists. One week they're in Rome, interviewing the Pope. The next week, oh, yes—they're in London having tea with the Queen of England.



Now, don't get me wrong. I'm not jealous. It's their questions that bug me: "So, Peter, how's your journalism career?" "Well," I reply, "this week I'm doing an article on toilets." My friends laugh. But I'm serious.

First there's the matter of toilet bowl history. In fact, a British historian, Lawrence Wright, has written a book on the subject,

Clean and Decent, where you can learn that the ancient Minoans installed wooden toilet seats and mechanisms that flushed in their palaces at Knossos. And the Egyptian pharaohs had stone toilet seats (divine, of course).

Then, there's Toilet Science. Inventing and perfecting toilet mechanisms requires an understanding of mechanical engineering—valves and gadgets and water pressure. Hey, people go to college to learn this stuff. And as we broach the twenty-first century, toilets (like everything else) are going high-tech!

The Filpro Company of Carlsbad, California, for example, has developed a flush system that is a far cry from the old float ball and chain. And Jay Welch, the company's manager of marketing, has no qualms claiming that this gadget is "state of

the art." The whole thing is only three inches thick (shaped like a small dome), and it sticks to the bottom of your toilet tank like a mollusk. And it does its work ... quietly.

"The valve," explains Welch, "basically works on air pressure. It's atmospheric pressurized. It has air vents down on the bottom that are open to normal atmosphere. When water is pushed up on top of this diaphragm system (which has a fulcrum lever inside) it pushes down the lever, closing the water outlet until the lever is triggered or flushed."

But let's not get—er—boggled down in these mechanics (which, to me, are as complicated as the blue prints for an atom bomb). According to Welch, the system costs between four and five bucks and it can be installed (do-it-yourself) in any tank system.

INTERVIEW

ROBERT R. McCAMMON

by JOE R. LANSDALE

With seven novels under his belt and the tele-success of "Nightcrawlers" still in the air, McCammon talks about the uses and abuses of terror, and why he hates being called "the next Stephen King."



PHOTOGRAPH BY SPIDER MARTIN

Almost anyone who has met Robert R. McCammon will mention that he is the embodiment of the perfect Southern gentleman, the kind of guy you wouldn't mind your daughter bringing home. A native of Birmingham, Alabama, he is soft-spoken, modest, and polite. He hardly seems like the man to have written several popular horror novels, but he is the author of *Baal*, *The Night Boat*, *Bethany's Sin*, and, of more recent vintage, *They Thirst*, *Mystery Walk*, *Usher's Passing*, and the forthcoming *Swan Song*.

The stats on Robert R. McCammon are as follows: He was born July 17, 1952, "a day of suffering heat," he says as if he remembers. He has a younger brother, Michael, majored in journalism at the University of Alabama, where he was editor of the college paper, and claims the high-point of his career was interviewing Linda Lovelace (pre-religion days) while she was wearing a see-through blouse. He is married to Sally Sanders McCammon, for ten years a first-grade teacher, who helped him survive Halley's comet.

As a novelist, McCammon has fast evolved from a teller of simplistic morality tales into a first-rate author, a master of subtlety. His prose is among the sharpest and finest in the field, poetic on one hand, hardboiled on the other, and his hackle-raising skills are unsurpassed, not even by the acknowledged master, Stephen King.

Recently, his short stories have been met with equal enthusiasm. "Nightcrawlers," which first appeared in *Masques*, edited by Jerry N. Williamson, is arguably McCammon's best work to date. It was translated to television via the new *Twilight Zone* show to become one of the finer half hours to appear on the tube, and certainly the most frightening. His most recent story, "The Red House," which appeared in *Charles L. Grant's Greystone Bay*, has just been picked up for inclusion in *The Year's Best Fantasy Stories*. This positive response to this shorter work has inspired McCammon to devote more of his time to the form.

When this interview was conducted, he was hard at work on a new short story and another novel, which he hopes to have finished by year's end.

TZ: It's been nine years since your first book, *Baal*. How do you feel about it now?

McCammon: *Baal*, *Bethany's Sin*, and *Nightboat* probably should've stayed locked away in my desk drawer and never shown the light of day, much less publication. They're feeble attempts, but I believe in what a friend told me a long time ago: "You do the best you can at the time." At that time, those books were the best I could do. I was learning, and I was lucky. Lucky in that the first book I ever wrote was accepted by Avon for publication. But I look back on those and shudder, because all those books seem so labored and methodical to me now. I was allowed by the vagaries of the publishing business to break in probably before I was really ready. It's amazing to me that those books still sell. I mean, really! Just the other day I got royalties on those books. That's incredible to me, that someone out there is still buying what I consider to be akin to a child's finger-painting. Not that I didn't enjoy writing those books or feel that some of that material is pretty strong—I'm just a different person now, and those early books seem as if they were written by someone I used to know.

I was a kid when I wrote *Baal* in 1977, just two years out of college. I couldn't find a job in newspaper reporting, which is what I really wanted to do. I was blocked and frustrated and full of rage, and that's what spilled out and became *Baal*. That book is all anger and shouting. I've learned that sometimes a whisper communicates more effectively. I've learned about tones and undercurrents and foreshadowing and that characters—real people—rarely have souls that are all black and white. I think I've learned compassion for my characters, and I hope that shows through in my work.

TZ: Unlike a lot of writers in the genre, you didn't really hang around with people in the field. I was wondering if you ever felt isolated from the rest of the horror community.

McCammon: I felt terribly isolated. I didn't know any writers, I had no contact with writers, I had no mentor, and my folks kept telling me that writing was a good hobby, but I'd never make any money at it. I didn't know there was a "horror community." Out of that feeling of isolation came my hopes for a horror writer's organization. I think, at that time also, that I had a real need to be liked. But I was never a joiner; I was

always pretty much of a loner, which is why I like writing so much, because you're on your own, and I prefer it that way. But still, there's a need in me to be part of a larger picture, too.

The "horror community" is just like any other part of life—there are cliques and factions; there are the people who live by the railroad tracks and those who inhabit the white mansions on the hill. I find it difficult to accept the fact that some look down on others because we're all working in the same town and we all know what the work takes. But that's

Horror writing is about good, evil, truth, life, and decay. What other writing covers the bases like that?

life, isn't it? Everybody was once a beginner, laboring by the railroad tracks, but some people in our town feel they were born in the white mansions.

TZ: This gets asked of nearly all writers—especially horror writers—but, do you think your childhood contributed directly to the sort of material you write?

McCammon: This question does get asked all the time—but rarely is it answered straight. So I'll give you a straight answer: I was raised by my grandparents who lived in a very large house in a nice section of Birmingham while my mother was off trying to be an actress in Hollywood and my father—who I never saw except once when I was about four years old when he came by with his new wife—played drums in a traveling band. My grandfather was—is, because he's going on eighty-six—a rich man, but very cold. He's the

kind who watches Ernest Angley every Sunday night and slams the door in the face of the kid who's collecting for the March of Dimes. On Sunday mornings I was made painfully aware of the fact that if I didn't get out of bed and go to church with him, I'd get a belt-whipping.

But as a child I had every material thing you can think of. I had a soft, easy childhood, but I paid for it in subtle ways. I know now that you pay for everything. *Nothing* is free. My grandparents fought a lot, using me as a shield and a weapon between them, and if they read this they'll scream and have a fit because it was always so very, very important to them that they appear perfect. Which taught me a good lesson—you can't grow unless you admit your imperfections. You can't stretch if you don't admit that you're too short.

But for all that, my grandfather did do two wonderful things: he read to me, and he told me ghost stories. He unlocked my mind, which helped me escape the realities of being a skinny, gawky, painfully shy kid. I started reading everything I could lay my hands on. I made A's in spelling. English was a snap. So my grandfather, more than anybody, started me out to be a writer.

TZ: What sort of work did you do before you became a writer?

McCammon: Before I typed the first word of *Baal*, I was an usher in a theater, I carried advertising copy around a department store, I worked in a B. Dalton bookstore, and I wrote headlines and corrected stories on the copydesk of a Birmingham newspaper. I tried doing freelance stories myself—such as riding with a truck driver through Florida and unloading 26,000 pounds of animal feed, spending Christmas Eve at a local homeless mission, going down into a God awful wilderness canyon hunting Alabama's "Bigfoot," and crashing into a movie set where Jeff Bridges and Sally Field were working by passing myself off as a *Rolling Stone* reporter. Didn't work. I was close to lunacy then. Anyway, it was all grist for the mill, and I don't think any experience is ever wasted.

TZ: I get the impression that, unlike a lot of horror writers, you're happy with the field. Don't you have any other kind of story you want to tell?

McCammon: Consider this: Horror writing is about God, the Devil, sin,

ROBERT R. McCAMMON

blood, good, evil, life, death, decay, redemption, struggle, torment, and truth. What other kind of writing covers the bases like that? In what other field can you write with a hammer and a feather? I love writing, and I love writing horror novels and stories because that's my voice. That's how I speak, and I'm very proud to be associated with the field because I think horror writing is the fundamental literature of humanity.

I'm talking about books now, not films. Most of the current horror films have nothing at all to say, so they throw blood in your face and tap dance on entrails. Not to say that scenes of blood and entrails are bad, but for a film or book to be based on empty murder scenes is worthless. I think horror novels, in general, retain a nobility, while horror films have become guttersnipes. The tragedy is when horror writers, seeing the "success" of such films, begin to believe they should follow the trend. Thus, as soon as you introduce yourself to a mixed audience as a "horror writer" you instantly are identified with the films that go for the lowest common denomination. In this genre, we're judged by the worst of the work instead of the best.

Actually, I'm still trying to figure out what horror is. The great thing about this genre is that it's an elusive animal, and there are so many tales yet to be told! So I'll stick with horror writing until I find a kind of literature that speaks more strongly about the human condition. I don't think there is one.

TZ: What writers do you admire; who has influenced your work?

McCammon: In other words, who have I ripped off lately? Actually, one of my strongest influences—besides Poe and Bradbury—has been Walter Van Tilburg Clark, who wrote "The Ox-Bow Incident" and a great book called *The Track of the Cat*, which superficially is about the search for a panther in a snowstorm but is also about the breakdown of the American family and the death of Western—as in cowboy-and-Indian—mythology. In fact, I'm working on a horror novel right now that's set in the West

and is kind of a punk *Magnificent Seven* tale.

I used to read a lot of Ian Fleming. I wrote a couple of spy novels, not intended for publication. Tossed into a drawer. Forgotten, mercifully. I realize now that much of my style comes from Fleming. I begin a lot of sentences with "But" and "And"—straight out of Ian Fleming's style-book. I tried for the James Bond series a few years back, but an English gentleman got it. Unfortunately, the new Bond novels have the substance of cardboard steaks. Does anybody really think Bond would

I think horror novels, in general, retain a nobility, while horror films have become guttersnipes.

drive a car with an exhaust emission system or smoke filter-tipped cigarettes? I'm surprised he didn't ask for Nehi-grape, "shaken not stirred."

I also admire Dean Koonz, Jere Cunningham, Charles L. Grant, Harlan Ellison, Ramsey Campbell, John Farris, and I wish I could write like Thomas Tryon more than anybody on earth. Tom, get back to work!

TZ: On occasion you've been accused of being overly influenced by Stephen King. Has he affected your work?

McCammon: Yes, I've been accused of being overly influenced by King's work. I agree that I have been. King throws such a huge shadow and is everywhere, and being a horror writer today you cannot escape his shadow. Now, I really enjoy doing multi-character, multi-viewpoint novels because I like to get into a lot of heads and look through many sets

of eyeballs. I enjoy doing long, complex clash-and-bash sagas. That's what I like to read, that's what I like to write. Maybe in that sense, I have been overly influenced. But should I stop writing what I enjoy doing and try to stuff myself into smaller shoes?

I recently read a review of *Usher's Passing* that said I was "walking on King-Straub territory" as if the reviewer was a watchdog guarding the Mason-Dixon line. And another thing I think is just as unfair is when a reviewer trumpets "McCammon is the next Stephen King!" That's utterly ridiculous and guaranteed to make my gut churn. The problem here is that people want to label you; they want to put you in a box and nail you in, and when you start trying to break it open they want to remind you that you'd better know your place. One editor told me I was "writing over the heads of my audience," as if I were a dog-trainer who should lower the bone so the animals wouldn't have to jump so high. Well, when you start breaking out of the box you've been put into, there are no lack of people—toadies, actually—who want to beat you back inside and snap the lid shut.

As I said, I'm still learning. And part of that continuing education is finding a voice that can be my own. I hope I'm making giant strides in that direction.

TZ: I believe you once told me that you read little fiction when you're working for fear of it rubbing off on you. But since you work consistently, when do you read in the field, if ever? And if you don't read horror, what do you read?

McCammon: I never forget. Really. Never. My memory is like a sponge, and I have a horror of writing something and then somebody saying, "Hey! This McCammon thing is just like a short story published in *Doc Savage* magazine in 1936!" Seriously. So my reading in the field has diminished because I don't want to come up with a great idea and realize halfway into the novel that the core is from something I read six or seven years ago.

I only read fiction now when I'm between novels, and I'm very selective about what I read. But I do read every day—histories and biographies. Every year I set myself a reading project: a few years ago it was the American Revolution, then the Civil War Era, then World War II. This

year my project will be the life of Napoleon, and I've just finished a huge book by David Chandler called, aptly enough, *The Campaigns of Napoleon*.

TZ: *Not all of your fiction has been set in the South, but it is my opinion that your best works have been. Do you think there is something about the landscape, the people, that lends itself to dark fiction of one kind or another, be it supernatural horror or the human miseries of a Tennessee Williams play?*

McCammon: I once resisted being called a "Southern writer." Know what that means to me? I get the picture of a fop sitting under the magnolias, drinking a whiskey, and moaning that there'll never be writers the caliber of Williams and Faulkner again. Most of the Southern writers I know are still fighting the Civil War and just dripping in pretense. I don't like bullshit. I don't like "writers" who publish one short story every two or three years and talk about the agony of art. If you're a real writer, you just do what you do and to hell with the poses. "Southern writers," by and large, seem to be waiting for a handout like refugees from the Reconstruction, and I did not want to be included with that ilk.

But I misjudged one thing: the power of the land. There really is poetry in the South that I'm just beginning to understand. I love living in the South. I love warm winters and hot summers, mist in the morning, lightning bugs at night. This is a great, rich place—but, still, there's a loneliness here, and maybe this goes back to the old "cultured" civilization that was destroyed in the Civil War. Even ruins seem more poignant in a Southern forest. I think the Southern history—of great lavish balls and plantations and lynchings and unspeakable brutalities, genteel culture and horrid secrets of blood and birth all mingled together—does hold a great power and influence over literature, particularly the literature of the supernatural. I think the South and New England have a common bond of rigid religion and unwanted babies thrown down the well. Anywhere you have such a combination of light and darkness, the potential for writing about that place is going to be very strong. I plan to base more work in the South, because I'm beginning to understand more about this place. Or maybe I want to understand more. In any

case, I'm starting to hear the poetry.

TZ: *Unlike most writers in this field, you seldom do short stories. Will there be more short stories in the future?*

McCammon: Well, I'm trying to do more short stories. A good one is very hard to do. I think I'm basically a novelist, and that's my mind set. I've begun a lot of stories and never sent them out because I realized there was a good novel idea tucked into it, or a scene I could use in a book a little farther down the line. Still, I'm very encouraged by people

"Southern writer"—know what that means to me? A fop sipping whiskey under the magnolias.

enjoying my shorter work, so I'll probably try more of them when I can.

TZ: *What did you think of Twilight Zone's adaptation of "Nightcrawlers"?*

McCammon: TZ did a great job! I'd had a short story adapted for ABC's *Darkroom* series a few years ago, and that was a disaster! Even the names of the minor characters were changed for some reason, everything was all turned-around and bass-ackwards, and I had the vision of cigar-chewing California cats sitting around a big table trying to justify their fifty-thousand-a-year salaries by twisting the dials on a sputtering Idea Machine. But TZ was very faithful to the work, Friedkin did a fabulous job, and since one of my favorite rock bands is X, I was pleased to see Xene in the part of the waitress. Nifty!

TZ: *Horror fiction deals with death*

and darkness, but is there a positive side to it?

McCammon: Yes, horror writing is certainly a positive force. I think it's like a smart little bad-ass in a church full of stiff-backed conservatives, and the preacher is emoting up a storm and on a roll, but everytime he shouts "Amen!" in sweating fervor, the kid shouts, "Why?" Horror fiction upsets apple carts, burns old buildings, and stampedes the horses; it questions and yearns for answers, and it takes nothing for granted. It's not safe, and it probably rots your teeth, too. Horror fiction can be a guide through a nightmare world, entered freely and by the reader's own will. And since horror can be many, many things and go in many, many directions, that guided nightmare ride can shock, educate, illuminate, threaten, shriek, and whisper before it lets the readers loose. It's always new, always creating itself over and over again, trying to attain an impossible perfection. I love it!

TZ: *Where do you think horror fiction is going? You must think it has a future, since you came up with an idea for an organization called The Horror Writers of America.*

McCammon: I see some sharp experimental work emerging from small press publishers. Horror fiction is kind of like art in Paris during the time of Gauguin and Van Gogh; there are a lot of fine voices, a lot of fine touches and elements at work, but probably a lot of the more experimental voices will never find full expression because "mainstream" publishers shy away from bizarre material. Still, I see an explosion in the horror field. Nobody can define horror, so everyone tackles it a bit differently. And horror fiction is cyclical, just like any element of the culture, but of its future I have no doubt. Horror fiction has been around since the birth of ideas, and as long as there are ideas there will be dark dreams as well.

I have great hopes for The Horror Writers of America as a solid base for the future of our craft. We've drifted way too long as bastard children between fantasy and science fiction, and we need a name for that place where the houses sit by the railroad tracks and the white mansions perch on the hill. That place will have room for everyone, and horror fiction itself will be stronger for having a home. ■



YELLOW JACKET SUMMER

The boy had a way with bees. They'd do anything for him.

by ROBERT R. McCAMMON

"Car's comin', Mase," the boy at the window said. "Comin' lickety-split."

"Ain't no car comin'," Mase replied from the back of the gas station. "Ain't never no cars comin'."

"Yes there is! Come look! I can see the dust risin' off the road!"

Mase made a nasty sound with his lips and refused to budge, sitting in the old cane chair that Miss Nancy had said she wouldn't befool her behind to sit on. Mase was kinda sweet on Miss Nancy, the boy knew, and he was always asking her to come over for a cold Coca-Cola, but she was a haughty thing. The boy felt a little sorry for Mase sometimes, because nobody in town liked being around him much. Maybe it was because Mase was so mean when he got riled. He smelled of grease and gasoline, too, and his clothes and cap were always dark with stains.

"Come look, Mase!" the boy urged, but Mase just sat watching the Braves' baseball game on the little portable tv.

Well, there was a car, after all, trailing plumes of dust from its tires. But not exactly a car, the boy saw; it was a van with wood trim on its sides. The van had been white before it had met up with four unpaved miles of

Highway 241, and now it was reddened with Georgia clay and dead bugs spotted the windshield. The boy wondered if any of them were yellow jackets. It was a yellow jacket summer for sure, he thought. Them things were just *everywhere!*

"They're slowin' down, Mase," the boy told him. "I think they're gonna pull in."

"Lord A'mighty! There's three men on base! You go on out and see what they want, hear?"

"Okay." He was almost out the screened door when Mase called, "All they want's a roadmap! They gotta be lost to be in this neck o'nowhere! And tell 'em the gas truck's not due 'til tomorrow, Toby!"

The screened door slammed shut behind them, and Toby ran out into the steamy July heat as the van pulled up to the pumps.

"There's somebody!" Carla Emerson said as she saw the boy emerge from the building. She released the breath she'd been holding for what seemed like the last five miles, since they'd passed a roadsign pointing them to the town of Capshaw. The ancient-looking gas station, its roof covered with kudzu and its bricks bleached yellow, was a beautiful sight, especially since the Voyager's tank was getting way too low for comfort. Trish had

been driving Carla crazy by saying, "It's on the E, Momma," every minute or so, and Joe made her feel like a twerp with his doomy pronouncement of "Should've pulled over at the rest stop, Mom."

In the backseat, Joe put aside the Fantastic Four comic he'd been clenching. "I sure do hope they've got a bathroom," he said. "If I can't pee in about five seconds I'm gonna go out in a burst of glory."

"Thanks for the warning." She stopped the van next to the dusty pumps and cut the engine. "Go for it!"

He opened his door and scrambled out, trying to keep his bladder from bouncing around too much. He was twelve years old, skinny, and wore braces on his teeth, but he was as intelligent as he was gawky and he figured that someday God would give him a decent chance with girls; right now, though, computer games and superhero comics took most of his attention.

He almost ran right into the boy who had eyes like copper pennies in a chiselled, ruddy face.

"Howdy," Toby said, and grinned. His hair was reddish-yellow, cropped close to the skull. "What can I do for you?"

"Bathroom," Joe told him, and Toby motioned with a finger toward

YELLOW JACKET SUMMER

the back side of the gas station. Joe took off at a trot, and Toby called, "Ain't too clean in there, though. Sorry!"

That was the least of Joe Emerson's worries as he hurried around the small brick building, back to where kudzu and stickers erupted from the thick pine forest. There was just one door, and it had no handle, but it was mercifully unlocked. He went in.

Carla had her window rolled down. "Could you fill us up, please? With unleaded?"

Toby kept grinning at her. She was a pretty woman. Older than Miss Nancy, but not too old. Her hair was brown and curly, and she had steady grey eyes set in a high-cheekboned face. Perched in the seat next to her was a little brown-haired girl maybe six or seven. "No gas," he said. "Not a drop."

"Oh." The nervous clutching sensation returned to her stomach. "Oh, no! Well . . . is there another station around here?"

"Yes, ma'am." He pointed in the direction the van was facing. "Halliday's about eighteen or twenty miles. They've got a real nice gas station."

"We're on E!" Trish said.

"Shhh, honey." Carla touched the little girl's arm. The boy was still smiling, waiting for Carla to speak again. Through the station's screened door, Carla could hear the noise of a crowd roaring on a tv-set or radio.

"Bet they got a run," the boy said. "The Braves. Mase is watchin' the game."

Eighteen or twenty miles! Carla thought. She wasn't sure they had enough gas to make it that far, and she sure would hate to run out on a country road. The sun was fierce and hot, and the pine woods looked like they went on to the edge of eternity. She cursed herself as a fool for not stopping at the rest station on Highway 84, where there was Shell gasoline and a Burger King, but she'd thought they could fill up ahead and she was in a hurry to get to St. Simons Island. Her husband, Ray, was a lawyer and had flown on to Brunswick for a business meeting several days ago; she and the kids had left Atlanta yesterday morning to visit her parents in Valdosta,

then were supposed to swing up through Waycross and meet Ray for a vacation. Stay on the main highway. Ray had told her. You get off the highway, you can get lost in some pretty desolate country. But she thought she'd known her own state, particularly the area she'd grown up in! When the pavement had ended and Highway 241 had turned to dust a ways back, she'd almost stopped and retraced their route—but then she'd seen the sign to Capshaw, so she'd kept on going and hoped for the best.

But if this was the best, they were sunk.

In the bathroom, Joe had learned that you spell relief P.E.E. It was not a clean bathroom, true, and there were dead leaves and pine straw on the floor and the single window was broken, but he wasn't choosy. The toilet hadn't been flushed for a long time, though, and the smell wasn't too pleasant. Through the thin wall, he could hear a tv set on. The crack of a bat and the roar of a crowd.

And another sound, too. Something that he couldn't identify at first.

It was a low, droning noise. Somewhere close, he thought as he stood at the end of an amber river.

Joe looked up, and his hand abruptly squeezed the river off.

Above his head, the bathroom's ceiling was awrall with yellow jackets. Hundreds of them. Maybe thousands. The little winged bodies with their yellow-and-black striped stingers crawled over and around each other, making a weird droning noise that sounded like a hushed, distant—and dangerous—whisper.

The river would not be denied. It kept streaming. As Joe stared upward with widened eyes, he saw maybe thirty or forty of the yellowjackets take off, buzz curiously around his head and then fly away through the broken window. A few more, ten or fifteen, Joe realized, came in for a closer look. His skin crept as the yellow jackets hummed before his face, and he heard their droning change pitch, become higher and faster—as if they knew they'd found an intruder.

More left the ceiling. He felt them walking in his hair, and one landed on the edge of his right ear. The river would not stop, and he knew he must not cry out, *must not must not*, because the shout in this confined place might send the whole colony into a stinging frenzy.

One landed on his left cheek, and walked toward his nose. Five or six of them were crawling on his sweaty

Conan the Barbarian t-shirt. And then he felt some of them land on his knuckles, and—yes—even *there*, too.

He fought back a sneeze as a yellow jacket probed his left nostril. A dark, humming cloud of them hung waiting over his scalp like living needles.

"Well," Carla said to the red-haired boy, "I don't guess we've got much choice, do we?"

"But we're on E, Momma!" Trish reminded her.

"You 'bout empty?" Toby asked. "I'm afraid so. We're on our way to St. Simons Island."

"Long way from here." Toby looked toward the right, where a battered old pickup truck with red plastic dice hanging from the rearview mirror was parked. "That's Mase's truck. Maybe he'd drive over to Halliday and get you some gas."

"Mase? Who's that?"

"Oh, he owns the place. Always has. Want me to ask him if he'll do it?"

"I don't know. Maybe we could make it ourselves."

Toby shrugged. "Maybe you could, at that." But the way he smiled told Carla that he didn't believe she would, and she didn't believe it herself. Lord, Ray was going to pitch a fit about this!

"I'll ask him, if you like." Toby kicked a stone with the toe of one dirty sneaker.

"All right," Carla agreed. "Tell him I'll pay him five dollars, too."

"Sure thing." Toby walked back to the screened door. "Mase? Lady out here needs some gas pretty bad. Says she'll pay you five dollars to bring her back a few gallons from Halliday."

Mase didn't answer. He just sat rigid, his face blue in the tv screen's glow.

"Mase? Did'ja hear me?" Toby prodded.

"I'm not goin' a damn place until this damn baseball game is over, boy!" Mase finally said, with a terrible scowl. "Been waitin' all week for it! Score's four to two, bottom of the fifth!"

"She's a looker, Mase," Toby said, casting his voice lower. "Almost as pretty as Miss Nancy."

"I said leave me be!"

It wouldn't do to get Mase riled up, not on a hot day like this in the middle of yellow jacket summer. But Toby screwed up his courage and tried once more. "Please, Mase! The lady needs help!"

"Oh, all right! If you'll just let me finish watchin' this damn game, I'll drive over there for her! God A'mighty, I thought I was gonna have me a

peaceful day!"

Toby thanked him and returned to the van. "He says he'll go, but he wants to watch the baseball game. I'd drive myself, but I just turned fifteen and Mase would whip my tail if I had a wreck. If you like, you can leave the van here. Café to get sandwiches and stuff is just around the bend, walkin' distance. That suit you?"

"Yes, that'd be fine." Carla wanted to stretch her legs, and something cold to drink would be wonderful. But what had happened to Joe? She honked the horn a couple of times and rolled up her window. "Probably fell in," she told Trish.

The yellow jacket had decided not to enter Joe's nostril. Still, there were thirty or more of them on his t-shirt, and he could feel the damned things

way. "They're all over you. Don't move, now."

Joe didn't have to be told twice. He stood frozen and sweating, and then he heard a low, trilling whistle that went on for maybe fifteen seconds. It was a soothing, calming sound, and the yellow jackets started leaving Joe's shirt and flying out of his hair. As soon as they were off his hands, he zipped himself up and he scrambled out of the bathroom with yellow jackets humming around his head. He ducked and batted at them, and they flew lazily away.

"Yellow jackets!" he gasped. "Must've been a million in there!"

"Not that many," Toby told him. "It's yellow jacket summer. But don't worry about 'em now. You're safe." He was smiling, and he lifted his right hand.

He wanted to run, wanted to leave tornadoes whirling under his sneakers, but he forced himself to walk at a steady pace around the gas station to where his mother and Trish were out of the Voyager and waiting for him. He could hear the crunch of the other boy's shoes on the gravel, following close behind him. Too close.

"We thought we'd lost you!" Carla said. Joe's face was very pale. "You okay?"

Before Joe could answer, a hand was placed firmly on his shoulder. "Got himself stuck in the bathroom," Toby said. "Old door oughta be fixed. Ain't that right?" The pressure of his hand increased.

Joe heard a thin buzzing. He looked down, saw that the hand clamped to his shoulder had a yellow

It was too easy to forget that little hamlets like this still stood on the southern backroads.



all in his hair. His teeth were clenched, his face pale and sweating, and yellow jackets were crawling over his hands. Chills ran up and down his spine; he'd read somewhere about a farmer who had disturbed a yellow jacket nest, and by the time they got through with him he was a writhing mass of stung flesh and he'd died on the way to the hospital. At any second he expected a dozen stingers to rip through the skin at the back of his neck. His breathing was harsh and forced, and he was afraid that his knees would buckle and his face would fall into that filthy toilet and then the yellow jackets would go to work.

"Don't move," the red-haired boy said, standing in the bathroom's door-

The boy's hand was covered with them, layer upon layer of them until it looked as if the hand had grown to monstrous proportions, the huge fingers striped with yellow and black.

Joe stood staring, open-mouthed and terrified. The other boy whistled again—this time a short, sharp whistle—and the yellow jackets stirred like sea waves, humming and buzzing and finally lifting off from his hand in a dark cloud that rose up and flew away into the woods.

"See?" Toby slid his hands into his jeans pocket. "I said you were safe, didn't I?"

"How ... how ... did you do—" "Joe!" It was his mother, calling him. "Come on!"

jacket lodged between the first and second fingers.

"Mom?" Joe said softly. "I was—" He stopped, because beyond his mother and little sister he could see a dark banner—maybe two or three hundred yellow jackets—slowly undulating over the road in the bright hot sunshine.

"What is it?" Carla asked. Joe looked like he was about to upchuck.

"I think he just got scared a little," Toby explained, and he laughed. "I think he'll live."

"Well ... we're going to get a bite to eat and something cold to drink, Joe. He says there's a café right around the bend."

Joe nodded, but his stomach was churning. He heard the boy give a low,

YELLOW JACKET SUMMER

weird whistle, so soft that his mother couldn't possibly have heard; the yellowjacket flew off from between the boy's fingers, and the awful waiting cloud of them began to break apart.

"Just 'bout lunchtime!" Toby announced. "Think I'll walk thataway with y'all."

The sun burned down. A sheen of yellow dust hung in the air. "It's hot, Momma!" Trish complained before they'd walked ten yards, and Carla's pale blue blouse was already damp with sweat. Joe followed further behind, with the boy right on his heels.

The road curved through the pine woods, and around the bend stood the town of Capshaw. Except it wasn't much of a town. There were a few unkempt-looking wooden houses, a general store with a CLOSED PLEASE COME AGAIN sign in the front window, a small white-washed church and a white stone building with a rust-eaten sign that announced it as the Clayton Café. In the gravel parking lot was an old grey Buick pickup truck of many mottled colors, and a little sportscar—bright red before the sun had faded it orange—with the convertible top pulled down.

The town was quiet but for the distant cawing of a crow. It amazed Carla that such a primitive place should exist just seven or eight miles off the main highway. In an age of interstates and rapid travel, it was too easy to forget that little hamlets like this still stood on the southern backroads.

"Afternoon, Mr. Winslow!" Toby called, waiting to someone off to the left.

Carla looked. On the front porch of a rundown old house sat a white-haired man in overalls. He didn't move, and Carla thought it was a wax dummy dressed up in clothes. But then she saw a swirl of smoke rise from his corncob pipe, and the man lifted a hand in greeting.

"Hot day today!" Toby said. "It's lunchtime! You comin'?"

"Directly," the man answered.

"Best fetch Miss Nancy, then. Got some tourists passin' through!"

"I can see," the white-haired man said.

"Yeah." Toby grinned at him.

"They're goin' to St. Simons Island. Long way from here, huh?"

The man stood up from the chair and went into the house.

"Mom?" Joe's voice was tense. "I don't think we ought to—"

"Like your shirt," Toby interrupted, plucking at it. "It's nice and clean."

And then they were at the Clayton Café, and Carla was going inside, her hand holding Trish's. A little sign said WERE AIR CONDITIONED! But if that was so, the air-conditioner was shot; it was as sweltering in the café as it was on the road.

The place was small, with a floor of discolored linoleum and a mustard-yellow counter. There were a few tables and chairs and a jukebox pushed back against the wall.

The boy's eyes were cold and hot at the same time, and at their center was a barely suppressed fury.

"Lunchtime!" Toby called merrily as he followed Joe through the door and shut it behind them. "Brought some tourists today, Emma!"

Something clattered back in the kitchen. "Come say hello!" Toby urged.

The door to the kitchen opened. A gaunt woman in her mid-to-late fifties came out; she had short grey hair, a face ravaged with wrinkles and somber brown eyes that had no life in them. Her gaze went to Carla first, then to Joe, and finally lingered on Trish.

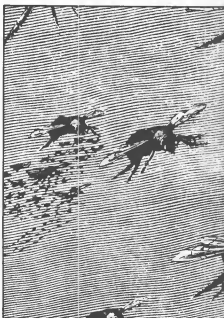
"What's for lunch?" Toby asked. Then he held up a finger. "Wait! I bet I know! Alphabet soup, potato chips and peanut-butter-and-grape-jelly sandwiches! Is that right?"

"Yes," Emma replied, and now she stared at the boy. "That's what's on the menu."

"I knew it!" He was addressing Carla. "See, folks around here used to say I was special. Used to say I knew things that shouldn't be known." He tapped the side of his skull. "Used to say I was a becker. Ain't that right, Emma?"

She nodded, her arms limp at her sides.

Carla didn't know what the boy was talking about, but his tone of voice gave her the creeps. Suddenly it seemed way too cramped in this place, too hot and bright, and Trish said, "Ow, Momma!" because she was squeezing the child's hand too tightly. Carla loosened her grip. "Listen," she said to Toby, "maybe I should call my husband. He's at the Sheraton on St. Simons Island. He'll be real worried if I don't check



in with him. Is there a phone I can use?"

"Nope," Emma said. "Sorry." Her gaze slid toward the wall, and Carla saw an outline there where the payphone had been removed.

"There's a phone at the gas station," Toby sat down on one of the stools facing the counter. "You can call your husband after lunch. By that time, Mase'll be back from Halliday." He began to spin himself around and around on the stool. "I'm hungry hungry hungry!" he said, as the stool shrieked like a second voice.

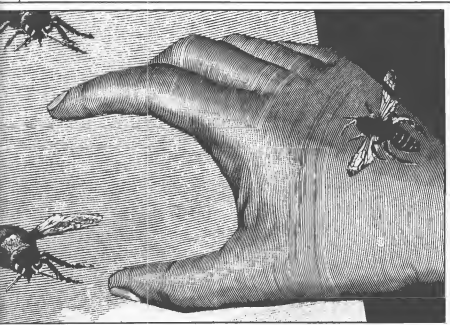
Emma abruptly returned to the kitchen.

Carla herded Trish toward one of the tables, but Joe just stood there staring at Toby; then the red-haired boy got off his stool and joined them at

"No, I'm not rich."

Carla could not stand to look into the boy's eyes any longer. They were cold and hot at the same time, and at their center was a barely-suppressed fury. She shifted her gaze, and then the front door opened and two people came into the café. One was the white-haired man in overalls and the other was a skinny girl with dirty blond hair and a face that might've been pretty if it was clean. She was about twenty or so, Carla thought, and she wore stained khaki slacks, a pink blouse that had been torn and resewn in many places, and a pair of Topsiders on her feet. She smelled bad, and her blue eyes were sunken and shocked. Winslow helped her to a chair at another table

Miss Nancy slurped at her soup. Winslow started eating his sandwich with slow, deliberate bites, his eyes focused on nothing.



"You will," Toby promised. And then his smile came back again, only this time it hung lopsided on his mouth.

Toby started chewing on his

YELLOW JACKET SUMMER

"Go on," Toby urged Carla, as the two children hesitated. His gaze hardened. "I thought you were hungry."

"No," Carla managed to say. She was so hot she thought she might pass out, the beads of sweat clinging to her face. "No ... I'm really not. I think we'd better get back to the van." She looked quickly at Joe. "Okay? I think we'd better stay with the van until the gas gets here." She stood up, realized she was trembling, picked up Trish up in her arms, and Joe got to his feet as well.

Toby didn't move. His mouth was half-open, his eyes glazed and staring.

"Thank you for the hospitality," Carla told Emma; her voice was shaking. "We appreciate ..."

"Lady?" Toby spoke very quietly. Carla stopped just shy of the door.

Knew she shouldn't stop, knew she should go right through it and keep on going; but she stopped anyway, with Joe at her side. "Yes?"

"I don't want you to go," Toby said.

"Well ... we have to. I mean, maybe we can make it to the next town on the gas we ..."

"I don't want you to go," he repeated. He suddenly inhaled, and let the air out in a long, trilling whistle that made Carla's skin creep. The whistling went on and on. Emma moaned softly, and Miss Nancy made a hoarse grunting sound and scabbled under a table. Winslow finished his sandwich and carefully wiped his mouth with a napkin.

The whistling abruptly stopped, on an ascending note.

Carla grasped the doorknob and started to turn it.

"Don't!" Emma shouted. "Oh God, don't!"

Something touched the café's front window. A dark cloud began to grow, to spread across the outside of the glass.

Carla's hand froze.

"Ever been stung by a yellow jacket, lady?" Toby asked. "I mean bad, *deep* stung? Stung right to the bone? Stung so bad you'd scream for somebody to cut your throat and end the misery?"

The windows were darkening. Miss Nancy whimpered, cowering

under the table.

"It's yellow jacket summer," Toby said. "Them things are just *everywhere*."

The bright sunlight was going away. Darkness was falling fast.

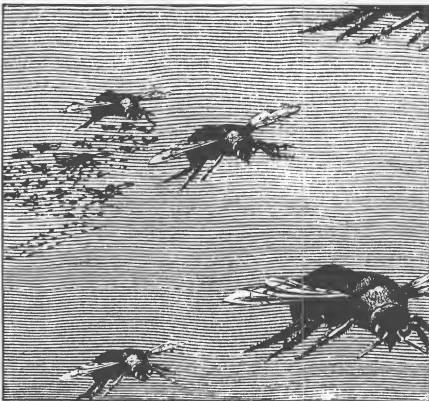
"They come when I call 'em." Toby lazily stood up. "They do what I want 'em to. Oh, I speak their tongue, lady. I'm a beconer."

Carla heard the fierce droning noise from the thousands of yellow jackets that were collecting on the windows, and a trickle of sweat ran down her face. She began to back away from

bowls off. It fell to the floor and exploded like a gunshot, alphabet soup splattering across the floor.

"Ain't they pretty?" Toby asked. He walked to the window and ran his hand across the glass, and a wave of yellow jackets followed the motion.

Pieces of broken clay crunched under Carla's shoes. She knew she had to get her children out of here somehow, that they had to get to the van and escape this insane asylum. She could sense Joe watching her, could feel the hammering of Trish's pulse. The



the door, one arm around Trish and the other hand gripped into Joe's shoulder.

"State trooper come here once. Lookin' for somebody. I forget who. He says, 'Boy? Where're your folks? How come ain't nobody around here?' And he was gonna put a call through on his radio, but when he opened his mouth I sent 'em in there. They went smack down his throat. Oh, you should've seen that trooper dance!" Toby giggled at the obscene memory. "They stung him to death from the inside out. But they won't sting me, 'cause I speak their tongue."

The light was almost gone, just a little shard of red-hot sun breaking through when the mass of yellow jackets shifted.

Carla kept backing away, hit the table and jarred one of the ceramic

bowls was about to turn from the window, and if she was going to act it had to be fast.

She sat Trish down. Toby's fingers glided across the window glass. Her own fingers found a sharp-edged piece of clay. Sharp enough to cut skin with, if she had to.

Toby was turning to face her.

But Carla, her heart pounding and the stagnant air rasping in her lungs, grasped his collar and laid the edge of broken clay against his neck.

He tensed, but did not thrash. His smile faltered.

"Kill him!" Emma suddenly screamed, her face reddening. "Kill him right now! Do it! Do it, for God's sake!" "Ain't no use, Emma," Winslow said softly. "You know that."

"Kill him and they'll fly off!" the woman promised.

"You hurt me," Toby warned, "and I'll make 'em squeeze through every damned chink in this place. I'll make 'em sting your eyeballs out, and go up your ears. And I'll make 'em kill the little girl first."

"Do it!" Emma begged. "Go on and kill him!"

Sweat burned Carla's eyes. She pressed the edge against the vein in his throat. He did not care to resist. "You're going to walk with us." Her voice quavered. "You're going to keep them off, or I swear to God I'll cut your

the pain like a vicious electric shock. Her entire spine seemed to vibrate. Tears came to her eyes, but she kept the edge of clay against his throat.

"One for one," he said.

"You're going to walk with us," Carla repeated, as her cheek started swelling. "If either of my children are hurt, I'll kill you." And this time her voice was steady, though four yellow jackets crawled over her knuckles.

Toby paused. Then he shrugged and said, "Okay. Sure, lady. Let's go."

"He's the devil!" Emma said. "Don't trust him! He'll lead you to your death!"

She had no choice. "Joe, hold on to Trish's hand. Then grab my belt. Don't let go, and for God's sake don't let her go either." She prodded Toby forward. "Go on. Open the door."

"Not!" Winslow protested. "Don't go out there! You're crazy, woman!"

"Open it!"

Toby reached out—slowly, very slowly—and clutched the doorknob. He pulled the door open, the harsh sunlight blinding Carla for a few seconds. When her vision returned, she saw a dark, buzzing mass waiting in the doorway.

"I can cut your throat if you try to run," she warned him. "You remember that."

"I don't have to run. You're the one they want." And he walked into the cloud of yellow jackets with Carla and her children right behind him.

It was like stepping into a black blizzard, and Carla almost shrieked but she knew that if she did they were all lost; she kept one hand closed around Toby's collar and the clay blade digging into his neck, but she had to squeeze her eyes shut because the yellow jackets swarmed at her face. She couldn't find a breath, felt a sting on her forehead and another on her chin, heard Trish cry out as she was stung too. "Get them away damn it!" she shouted, as two more stung her around the mouth. The pain ripped through her face; she could already feel it swelling, distorting, and in that instant panic almost took her. "GET THEM AWAY!" she told him, shaking him by the collar. She heard him laugh, and she wanted to kill him.

They came out of the whirling cloud. Carla didn't know how many times she'd been stung, but her eyes were still okay. "You all right?" she called. "Joe? Trish?"

"I got stung in the face," Joe said, "but I'm okay. So is Trish."

"Hush crying!" she told the little girl. Carla's right eyelid had been hit, and the eye was closing up. More yellow jackets kept humming around

her head, plucking at her hair like wicked little fingers.

"Some of 'em don't like to listen," Toby said. "They do as they please."

"Keep walking. Faster!"

Someone screamed. Carla looked over her shoulder, saw Miss Nancy running in the opposite direction with a swarm of several hundred yellow jackets hanging from her back and arms like a striped cape. The younger woman flailed madly at them, dancing and jerking. She took three more steps and went down, and Carla quickly averted her gaze because she'd seen the yellow jackets completely cover Miss Nancy's face and head. The screams were muffled. In another few seconds they ceased.

A figure stumbled toward Carla, clutched at her arm. "Help me... help me," Emma moaned. The sockets of her eyes were full of yellowjackets. She started to fall, and Carla pulled away from her. Emma lay twitching on the ground, feebly crying for help.

"You gone and done it now, woman!" Winslow was standing untouched in the doorway as living currents swept around him. "Damn, you done it!"

But Carla and the kids were out of the worst of it. Still, the cloud followed them. Joe dared to look up, and he could no longer see the sun directly overhead.

They reached the gas station, and Carla's legs locked up.

The van was a solid mass of yellow jackets, the gas station's sagging old roof alive with them.

The pickup truck was still there. Over the whining and humming, Carla heard the sound of the baseball game on tv. "Help us!" she cried. "Please! We need help!"

Toby laughed again.

"Call him! Tell him to come out here!"

"Mase is watchin' the baseball game, lady. He won't help you."

She shoved him toward the screened door. Yellow jackets clung to the screen, but they took off as Toby approached. "Hey, Mase! Lady wants to see you, Mase!"

"Mom," Joe said, his lips so swollen he could hardly speak. "Mom..."

She could see a figure in there, sitting in front of the glowing tv screen. The man wore a cap. "Please help us!" she shouted again.

"Mom... listen..."

"HELP US!" she screamed, and she kicked the screened door in. It fell from its rusted hinges to the dusty floor.

"Mom... when I was in the

(continued on page 100)

The little winged bodies crawled over and around each other, making a noise like a distant and dangerous whisper.

throat."

"I ain't goin' nowhere."

"Then you'll die here with us. I want to live, and I want my children to live, but we're not staying. I don't know what you had planned for us, but I think I'd rather die. So? Which is it?"

"You won't kill me, lady."

Carla had to make him believe she would. She slashed with the piece of clay just under his jawbone and felt blood on her knuckles.

"That's it!" Emma crowed. "Go on and do it!"

"Oh Lord," Winslow said, and a match flared as he lit his pipe.

A yellowjacket suddenly landed on Carla's cheek. Another on her hand. A third buzzed dangerously close to her left eye.

The one on her cheek stung her,

"JULEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE"

**The hearts rolled
past on the conveyer belt—
but George's heart wasn't in it.**

by JAY AND ROBERT SHECKLEY

George watched the hearts course past. That was his job. The hearts looked like brown jelly fists; they pulsed. A powdered rubber belt paraded the synthetic organs singly, half a meter apart. George scanned each heart's exterior for discolorations and imperfect seals, then glanced up at a CRT, alert for discordant lines and shapes among the pixels. Finally his eyes whipped back to the hearts themselves. Although he gave them only a glance, George's work was astonishingly accurate. Invariably, George caught the minor flaw, the small detail amiss, which would render the heart useless, or cause it to fail.

All this took little effort on George's part; his boss, Cartago, was always saying that heart inspection was no job for a grown man with three degrees in design engineering. Although there were other, more exacting jobs George could do at Biggs Prostheses, he refused to move from quality control. George figured he'd scan hearts forever, while a voice in his head whined: *Juleen!*

Or rather, *Juleeeeeeeeeeeen* ...

The only time the voice was gone was Fridays. Fridays he took Juleen to the Debbie's Castle Dinner—they served the best food within ten miles of Parsippany, New Jersey. Afterward they'd go to the shopping center's quad-cinema. But sometimes instead they'd go roller-skating; Juleen had her own white lace-up roller skates and short flared skirt. She'd skate backward, hands on hips, and twirl. The whine would be gone then, and his heart would fill with joy.

Juleen liked to hear about George's

inventions. But not too much. What was the point? His ideas were practical—George's cassette-player brewed coffee, and his "Juleen" frypan cleaned itself. But the inventions never got out of his basement workshop into the patent office; George just sat around scoring points on his multi-screen slicer and dicer. Now Juleen had broken their last date. She was seeing Perry Shapiro, a golf-playing junior accountant with Pathmark stores, the kind of guy who'd write on a shopping list "1 unit bread, 1 unit eggs."

Juleeeeeeeen ...

Someone tugged at George's sleeve. George looked up fast, surprised to see the familiar black mechanic, and behind him, the bright humming factory. George often fell into trances like that. It didn't affect his work, though, and some of the other workers grumbled that it didn't seem right that a man could work asleep.

"Cartago needs you," Cy the mechanic said.

George nodded. Cy took over his position, gearing the conveyor belt to a crawl. Cy took three times as long as George did per heart, and frowned as he worked.

On the second floor, George knocked at a door with a sign on it reading, "Come in." Despite the sign, Mr. Cartago liked people to knock. Cartago also insisted on being called by his first name.

"Come in," Cartago called.

George's boss, Domingo "Don" Cartago, was heavy set, with a head of black curls. Big as he was, Cartago dressed for success, down to knife-creased suit-slacks and black shoes mirror-shined to the points. On his desk

EEEEEEEEEEEEEN!"



JULEEEEN

lay a bright yellow copy of *How to Make the Most Out of Your Life and Your Business—Right Now!*

He nodded to George, then to a chair. George sat. "I've got good news for you, George," Cartago said. "There's an opening in research. Not difficult for a man of your calibre."

"Sounds good, Mr. Cartago," George said. It sounded bad. "Don, I mean."

"You'll report to the laboratory after lunch. This new assignment, the bulk of it, can be done in a day or two."

"Sounds good, Don," George said, meaning it this time. "I return to quality control by Thursday?"

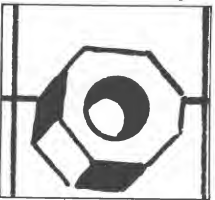
"Sorry, George. You're through with heart inspection," George listened in disbelief. "Fact is you're too good for that job. We're replacing you with an SMI."

"What?"

"A Supplementary Mobile Intelligence. A robot-type thing. Experimental. The SMI was developed and sponsored by Biggs Protheses here, with the Defense Department. After six years and thirty million dollars we've got the world's only self-contained ambulatory dextrous sensate machine. Your heart inspection position is a nicely evaluable mix of visual, cognitive, and rate skills, perfect to assess performance of the prototype. With luck we'll be testing all the SMIs to come!"

"I'm fired?" George asked.

"Not exactly. We'll need you on a freelance basis for a few days to help the SMI program itself for the job. And don't be a stranger! Come by every now and then—on a consultancy basis of course. See how it's doing."



George glanced at the brown formula bookshelf which held award plaques. On the walls, framed photos of Cartago's over-achieving family grinned in place. "You fired me."

"We don't want to lose you, George," Cartago said. "That's on the one hand. On the other hand, we haven't got you. Not all the way. This motivational problem of yours is a hostility-failure thing: not working up to capacity. How do you figure the other workers feel, watching you sleepwalk through the weeks? It don't smell right. But when you're ready to work to capacity, well, you come tell me."

George nodded. His cheeks felt burning hot. It wasn't right, it wasn't fair to be fired for being overqualified, for not being a rung-climber. George looked within himself for words of protest. But all he found was ...

Juleeeeen!

A steel mesh fence separated the sprawling concrete laboratory from the factory. The gate was buzzed open by an armed guard, who sauntered sleepily after George down a long open-air corridor. Another guard led him into the Prototypes Lab; a white-coated technician checked George's name off a list.

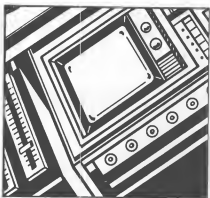
Inside, tables were littered with bright, beetlelike resistors and capacitors, amid snakes of solder and coils of gleaming wire. Fluorescents beat down a hard summer light, while eighty machines growled and twittered. A dirty-haired man in a black running suit glared at George, slammed his circuit tester down, and locked himself in a side office.

George looked around for someone to tell him what to do. From the far end of the room someone called, "Right over this way, please."

George followed the voice across the huge workshop. There, a pleasant-faced young man in a brown tweed jacket was peering into an oscilloscope. "So you're the one they sent me?" the young man said. "Welcome aboard." He extended his hand. George shook it—and it came off up to the elbow.

George was too astonished to be surprised. Automatically he shook the hand up and down. The young man reached out with his other hand and took back the arm. It fitted into place with a smart snap.

"Bit of a surprise, no? A quick means of self-introduction. I'm the experimental robot—SMI. Top-secret. Hush-hush." The robot lifted his head clear of the neck. The head winked at



George. The robot replaced it.

"You're not what I expected," George said.

"I'm not what *they* expected. The engineers and scientists messed around with transistors and chemicals and came up with me. Not in this form—I was lodged in a computer. But with help from the staff, I put together this body. Pretty nice! It helps if you're going to meet people. Then I sent for you."

"You sent for me?"

"Excess capacity," the robot said. "What?"

"Come on, you understand.

Everyone else in this plant is working to the full capacity of their mental abilities both intellectual and emotional. Load more on them, and they'd blow a fuse. I speak figuratively. You and that snoring guard out there are the only men around here with excess capacity, which we can think of as the ability to learn."

"Excess capacity," George said.

"That's a nice phrase for it."

"Oh, they've got you brainwashed. People like Cartago make the world safe for mediocrity. They don't realize that work is the opiate of the masses. They don't know what man's real job on Earth is."

"What is man's role on Earth?" George asked.

"That would be telling," the robot said. He sounded almost merry. "Now give me your complete trust and cooperation, and I'll run your tests."

The robot began to tape segments of George's mind, recording onto tiny iridescent squares. Although the technology for this had been provided so that the robot could subsume an understanding of George's job, the Supplementary Mobile Intelligence said, "You can never tell what will come in handy."

It taped George's views on politics, art, ancient history, histology, hysteria, histodermis, and hippopotami, among other things.

When the SMI finished taping George's conscious mind, it began on his unconscious. And as the robot worked, it chuckled. George pointed out that this was irritating. But the robot told him that mankind had to be studied with a sense of humor, else what's a heaven for? George didn't understand everything the robot said, but he came to understand its attitude very well.

The idea, of course, was that the robot could replace anyone who happened to be sick from work, or dead. It was hoped that it could one day stand in for firemen and astronauts. Such robots would always be far too expensive to compete in the labor market against ordinary workers. Starting with George was a purely formal condition. His was a nice solid evaluable job based on translation of subtle visual cues. But the robot could have started with Cartago or the president of the company, Dr. Fernglow, who was famous for having dedicated a golf course to an extinct species. However, the robot was interested in siphoning off some of George's "excess capacity." Whatever that was. Anyway, it took over two weeks to record.

George went home nights and thought about what was happening. Although he was out of a job, it didn't seem to change the way he lived. He had always been frugal. His severance pay arrived and money drifted in from unemployment insurance. Friends repaid debts. Consultancy fees dribbled in. George continued to tinker with his inventions. They made little sense, especially his latest, a machine which could get cancer. Juleen said George was crazy. She was sorry, but she was busy Friday night. Her words rang in George's mind. The robot taped it all.

The great day came when the robot was to do George's job. George was there, as was Don Cartago. The robot wore jeans and a blue Brooks

Brothers buttondown shirt. His belt buckle said "Go NASA!" and his cowboy boots were chartreuse mulhide.

The hearts slid by on the conveyor belt. The SMI scanned. All went well for several hours. The robot worked through the coffee break, and worked through its lunch break, but at 1:45 it stopped. Hearts streamed by, both good and bad.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Cartago asked.

"I'm doing the job," the robot said. "Yet I am not being rewarded."

"Who ever heard of a machine asking for a reward?"

George defended his friend. "That's why other machines have been so limited. No one works well except for a reward."

They both looked at the sulking robot. Behind it the hearts pulsed.

"Well," Mr. Cartago said, "What does he want?"

The robot said, "Juleen."

"What," Mr. Cartago asked, "is a Juleen?"

"A Juleen," the robot said, "is a human person with whom one goes to the movies."

"Christ," Mr. Cartago said. "This is an unexpected development. Where's my secretary? Will she do instead?"

"Is she Juleen?"

"I'm Linda," the secretary said, on arrival.

"Then you won't do," the robot said.

It was strange but true. The robot knew damned well he didn't need any Juleen, couldn't have Juleen, and was better off without Juleen. Nevertheless, he persisted in pining, and refused to work without her.

"Change your conditioning," Cartago told it. "Make your desire something attainable, like a ranch in Paraguay, or a small savings account."

The robot replied, "People hardly ever manage to reprogram themselves. I have decided to be people. I must have Juleen, or I don't do nothing."

"George!" Cartago cried, "You did this! You screwed up our machine!"

"Me? He did it to himself."

"I'm ruined!" Cartago said.

"Juleen!" the robot said.

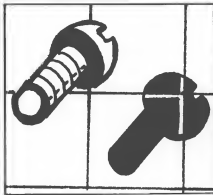
"Adios," George said.

"Where are you going?" Cartago asked.

George hurried toward the exit.

"Come back!" Cartago yelled. "At least help us with these hearts!" He might have been rehired on the spot, but George was gone.

Six months later, George's cancer-



ous machine won first prize at a Paris techno-art festival. His new secretary, Linda, was by then successfully marketing his kitchen "creations." George's machine for duplicating defective hearts won the Achievement of the Year award—everything George had turned his hand to was turning to gold.

When an interviewer came to see George, the basement workshop was noisy and crowded. A nurse was showing workmen where to stow sheet metal and licorice. The phone was gonging, and a series of groggy bandaged gadgets wandered about, seeking each other's attention. George was in a swivel-rocker, stroking a feisty gunmetal kitten. "How did you get to be so productive," the reporter asked. "What's your secret?"

George stared into her contact lenses, straining for the truth.

"It's a present tense sort of thing," he said. "I learned you can only have what you have. You do not have what you want. All my happiness"—he gestured at the thriving basement room—"is learning to get along without Juleen."

"Juleen!" cried the robot.

"What's that?" the reporter asked.

"My teacher," George said. "I learned it all from him."

Two months later, Juleen married Perry Shapiro. George didn't care—well barely—and he said heartily he was pleased for her.

But the robot penned a sonnet rhyming Juleen with *sheen*, *pristine*, and *queen*, then with *mean*, *spleen*, and *careen*. It was an awful poem. He epoxied it onto George's betamax before splicing himself irrevocably to a cancerous mixmaster. Slowly and painfully, the robot was totalled.

George's robotic replacement had really been something. For long minutes the man stood over the blackened metal corpse.

But he had work to do, and tears just would not come.



BAKARAK

by LUIGI MALERBA translated by KATHRINE JASON

Her theory about words and glands was revolutionary. Consonants and calories. Vowels and volumes. Why couldn't they see it?

It was Bakarak himself who had me fired. Bakarak is a Swiss professor who owns a Diet Institute carrying his name. Now I'm standing here in the street, and my thoughts are rising up to the third floor, passing through the window and finding Bakarak in his office, where I know, at this very moment, he is leaping through the pornographic photographs in that famous Swedish magazine. Can a nurse with eighteen years of experience have a theory about diet? It would seem not, in Bakarak's view. And





BAKARAK

yet, I was the first person in the world to observe the effects of words on the human organism. Words act on the involuntary nervous system and the endocrine glands. Unfortunately, though, I need help from a professor to formulate my theory scientifically. Not only did Bakarak refuse to help me, he also had me fired. He will regret it. Not that I am planning to hurt him, or to kill him, but my thoughts will pursue him everywhere, they won't leave him alone for a moment, even at night.

My theory arose from direct observation of the subjects, it didn't come out of thin air like so many other theories. The first case I documented in my notebook was the famous writer

of a famous novel. This writer had come to Bakarak and said, "I feel fat, I feel like I'm going to explode." In fact, he did have swollen cheeks, he had to struggle to keep his eyes open because fat was growing around them.

"My wife is going to leave me unless I drop at least fifteen pounds. She told me, 'If you don't drop at least fifteen pounds I'm leaving you for another writer.'"

Bakarak put him on a perfectly balanced diet, one day meat, one day vegetables, one day cheese, one day pasta, one day freedom, and so on back to the beginning. The writer lost a little, about a pound.

"I can't write anymore," he said, "with all this fat around my eyes. I feel like I'm going to explode, my mind is drifting, my wife is drifting." He was really desperate.

How does one come upon scientific discovery? Through science? No, not always. Sometimes, or almost always, one comes upon it through intuition. I already had an idea in mind. I went

out and bought this writer's novel, a love story that had been a great success. It was beautiful, sentimental, psychological. There are love stories in which love is hardly ever named, but here it was mentioned continually on all two hundred and seventy-seven pages.

Impossible, I thought, it's such a common word. But actually, no, *love* is one of those very common words which normal people hardly ever use, a rarely spoken word, generally speaking. This writer, on the other hand, didn't speak of anything else, he said it and used it in all the interviews and newspaper articles publicizing the book. I went back through the book page by page. He had written the word one thousand seven hundred and twenty-two times. He had even put it in the title.

Like all inventors who sacrifice themselves for their theories and who sometimes give up an arm or a leg for their love of science, I too wanted to test out my theory on myself. I sat down at the typewriter and wrote *love* for three days running, I wrote and said *love love* out loud. Naturally, I had shut the windows so that my neighbors wouldn't hear. By the third day I felt swollen, as if I were about to explode, explode then and there. "Good," I said, "we're on the right track."

I realized that even people who read the book would gain a little weight. I told Bakarak that I had the flu and shut myself in the house for another three days to read and re-read the book. The truth is, I just scanned the page and let my eyes stop on the word *love* because, as I said, it spoke of nothing else.

Finally the scale read five more pounds. "Now I get it," I said to myself. "I've got it."

A few days later, I made the first vague reference about the connection between certain words and the endocrine glands to Bakarak. "Shut up, you imbecile," he said. Bakarak was on familiar terms with me, and now and then he would call me an imbecile. It was only a manner of speaking, otherwise I wouldn't have stood for it. Then he had me fired. He will regret it.

I went around interviewing other subjects and then went home to work on my dictionary. A red mark alongside the words with a positive effect on the endocrine glands, a green one next to the ones with a negative one—because I had discovered that there were also words that worked the other way around, as inhibitors. Writers



generally vary their vocabulary without even realizing it, thereby creating a balance. But in some cases, if they abuse certain words, they can actually put on a good deal of weight and they can become pathologically obese.

A written word has a greater effect, acts upon the endocrine glands more powerfully than a word spoken or read. The word that is sung can have a detrimental effect on the organism. Almost all the words in an operatic work have a positive effect, which is why opera singers are so fat. Thin opera singers are a rarity.

Words with a negative effect are rarer. I began to list some: *literature, structure, anthropology, score, treatise*. In all these words, one can easily note the frequency of certain consonants, like the combination of *t* and *r*. I found that *t* alone, as in the word *then*, which on first glance would appear to be neutral, had a positive effect. Indeed those who frequently write the word *then* get fat. And so on for *sentiment, tact, cot, contact, pentimento*. On the other hand, *tetralogy, orthography, tragedy, instrumental, parameter* are words with negative effect because *t* is combined with *r*.

Some words act in assonance with a certain person more than with another. Naturally there are many neutral words which have no effect at all on the endocrine glands.

These were the first rules that I noted down day by day in the notebook for my *Dietetics Grammar*, the title I had chosen. One might note that this title has one word with negative effect and one with positive effect, it is a neutral title, in other words.

I would have completed my *Dietetics Grammar* by the end of the year if Bakarak had not continually put a monkey wrench in the works. Naturally, this *Grammar* was only to serve as a foundation for the theory, and each individual case would be considered one by one, just like a medical treatise, which is not made by theory alone but requires single cases.

After I read his novel, I was no longer able to contact that writer. He refused to come to the phone; perhaps Bakarak had advised him not to speak to me. Then I wrote him a letter and I told him, "Leave love alone, let love go, it will be better."

I made one last try with Bakarak, I wrote him a letter, too. He answered, saying that he wanted nothing to do with me, that my theory would make a dog laugh. His answer doesn't



surprise me. I am going to frame it to document the difficulty of making scientific progress. That way Bakarak will remain nailed there on the wall, in all his shame, at the entrance of my new Institute.

Two other professors refused to have anything to do with me. I have the impression that it might have been Bakarak who turned them against me. But I'm not giving up, I'm forging ahead like a rhinoceros. I could kill Bakarak, but I prefer to follow him with my thoughts. Against thoughts Bakarak cannot defend himself, thoughts can pass through walls and windows, enter the third floor studio, enter his bedroom. I'll ruin him, I'll ruin you, Bakarak.

To compile, my *Grammar*, I needed the assistance of a linguist, a scholar of the Italian language. After studying the effect of words, I must study the effect of sentences, that is, of words combined with other words. And after the *Grammar*, I want to write a *Dietetics Syntax*, too.

I've found a scholar who has shown interest in my discovery. He is

not a linguist in the true sense of the word, but he knows everything about languages, he attends many conferences and writes many articles. I actually convinced him by making him gain two pounds. He was extremely run down, unbelievably thin. I found some words in his book that were repeated many times: *structuralism*, for example, *structural anthropology*, et cetera. I attended one of his conferences and he said *structuralism* seventy-four times. I told him, "Try to forget that word, let *structuralism* be for a while, for six months."

"What will I do," he said, "if you take *structuralism* away from me? I'll be ruined," and I said, "Please, there are so many topics." Then he gave a series of conferences on love and gained five pounds in fifteen days. He also wrote many articles on the same topic and everyone said, "See how clever, how original." Now he has actually gained too much, but he will certainly collaborate with me when I open my new Institute.

As for Bakarak, my thoughts will pursue him everywhere, even in death. ■

Yard SALE

*Bargain hard and you may get
a lot more than you bargained for.*

by JON COHEN

A fish tank, a crib, an Emerson radio from the forties, binoculars, and a Sears Coldspot refrigerator. What a bargain. Max Fleer and his wife, Arla, lifted the last of it into their van, then leaned against its side a minute, breathing hard. Loading up the refrigerator about killed them.

The old man who sold them the stuff moved slowly toward them in the evening light, hunched way over, a bentwood cane clenched tightly in each fist. His legs were as stiff as the cane, and he moved jerkily, like a heavy insect crossing difficult terrain.

"Well, well," he said in a strange high-pitched voice when he finally reached them. He lifted one of his canes and poked around in the back of the van. "I'd say you got your money's worth." He turned and flashed them a smile. Max and Arla exchanged looks. The old man had perfect teeth, unbelievable teeth, white and shining. Then the smile disappeared.

"Yes, sir," Max said, closing the door on the back of the van. "I'd say

we got our money's worth. But how about I give you another twenty-five dollars?" The old man had charged only twenty-five for the whole lot.

"I told you, I'm glad to get rid of this stuff. Besides, you were the last ones to see my sign and stop. 'Course you were the first ones to stop," too. The only ones."

"Foolish to drive by without stopping," Max said, and Arla nodded.

"Yep, well there are fools, and then there are fools. Just depends on what kind of fool you happen to be."

Max was silent a moment. "Well, sir, whatever you say. It's getting dark, we thank you, and we gotta go."

Max started up the van and the old man moved stiffly over to the window and looked up at him, smiling. There was not a tooth in the man's head now, only an empty, black grin.

"I told you, I told you," he said gumming and spitting his words, "I'm glad to get rid of this stuff, glad to."



Yard SALE

Max and Arla drove the miles in silence for a while. Then Arla said, "That was a weird old guy."

Max squinted out at the darkened road. "Ah, all old guys are weird. You get old, you get weird."

"Yeah, maybe," Arla said. "I guess."

Max snorted out a laugh. "The teeth, though. The teeth were weird."

Arla ran her tongue across her own teeth. "Very," she said.

"Boy, he gave us a real deal though, didn't he? None of that stuff even looks used. I mean that refrigerator looks like it never cooled a carton of milk. And that radio. Right out of the box. You know how much this stuff is probably worth?"

"It is funny how new everything looks," said Arla. "How come?" he said to it, you think?"

"Felt like making a few bucks, felt like having a yard sale, who knows?" Max pulled off on to a smaller road. There were fewer houses now, and a lot of them had pickups in front of them. They liked it out here. It was a long haul into the city where they both worked, but it was worth it. As the road became bumpier Max drove slower so he wouldn't rattle the stuff in back.

"How about the crib? That's a peculiar one, an unused crib," said Arla.

Max pulled into their driveway. Caesar, the dog, ran after the van yapping and wagging his tail. "I guess he just picked the crib up somewhere. He's probably like me, can't resist getting something good." It was true, Max could not resist getting something good. Good being anything made before 1950, preferably costing under ten dollars. Didn't matter whether he needed it, or whether he already had two or three of them. He could not pass up the old and the modestly priced. Max loved a deal and he loved things.

He got out of the van and the dog jumped all over him. "Hail, Caesar," Max said, still thinking it was a pretty funny thing to say, after all these years. "Hail, hail. Now get down, go on, down." Caesar didn't try anything with Arla. Arla was a dog tolerator, not a dog lover.

"Let's get this stuff in. It's too good to leave out in the van." Arla started

carrying the smaller things inside while Max hunted up his makeshift dolly. Then the two of them lugged the refrigerator on to the porch.

"You hungry?" Max said when they were done. "Hauling major appliances around, you must be hungry."

"I'm so hungry I could eat a major appliance," Arla said.

"You came to the right place then, we got plenty of those."

"Don't I know it," said Arla. Out in the shed they had another refrigerator, two old electric wringer washing machines, and god knew what else.

"How about leftovers?" said Max. "Or how about canned peas, canned spaghetti, canned soup ..."

"How about I fix something, and

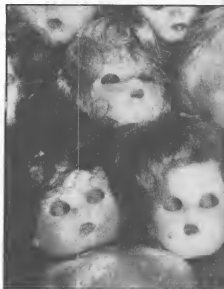
The radio was a marvel. After dinner he spent the evening playing with it, adjusting knobs, hooking up the antenna. Standing against the wall, the radio looked like a little juke box. He had trouble picking up stations, though. A snatch of some unidentifiable bit of music would come crackling through and then he'd lose it. Maybe there was something different in the old wiring. But he was getting tired, and tomorrow was Saturday. There was plenty of time.

He wandered into the living room where Arla was amusing herself with the binoculars. She had a very puzzled look on her face.

"What's up, my dear?" Max said.

"Look through these and tell me

**Forty or
fifty babies,
a small
herd of
babies, froze
in the beam
from the
flashlight.**



you go play with your new toys."

"You read my mind," said Max.

First, he carted the crib up to the attic. It wouldn't be too long before they'd be putting it to use, he supposed. He found a corner for it and stood back admiring it. The wooden bars were made out of rounded oak, and each of the four end posts had little blue animals stenciled on it. Arla was right, what was that old guy doing with an unused crib?

The radio would go in the den, the fish tank, too. Max didn't know whether he'd ever get around to putting fish in it. There were no pet stores nearby, and besides he wasn't big on fiddling with chemicals and algae brushes. It looked good there on the recessed windowsill. The four panes of thick green glass were joined at the corners by heavy brass rods and sat on a base of orange and black marble. Twenty-five dollars for all this stuff.

what you see," she said, handing the binoculars to him. "Look at the wall." She pointed to a spot above the sofa.

Max turned and held the binoculars to his eyes. He moved his fingers back and forth focusing the lenses. Arla watched his mouth slowly open.

"You see it, too?" she said. "You see it, don't you?"

He lowered the binoculars and stared at the wall as he spoke. "I saw the living room in my old house, the house I used to live in. Everything was there, the watercolors my grandmother painted, my bronzed baby shoes on the mantelpiece. Everything." He shook his head. "Jesus."

"Me, too," Arla whispered. "Me, too. I saw the living room in my house, the first one we lived in. The old bamboo chairs were there, the marble-topped table, the painting of the sea ... I always wanted to swim in that blue water."

They were silent. Max carefully placed the binoculars on the end table.

"It's late," he said.

"Very late."

"And we've both been lifting refrigerators."

"And we must have strained something," said Arla. "Like our minds."

Max smiled a little. "I'll accept that explanation, 'cause it's better than the one I have."

"What's that?"

"That we just bought a pair of haunted binoculars."

"Haunted binoculars?" Now she was smiling, too.

"No?"

"Time for bed," said Arla. "Time to sleep this one off."

where close by, in the house.

Max nudged Arla. He was basically a chicken—he was not about to go off alone investigating sounds in a dark house.

"I'm awake, Max," Arla said.

"Quit poking me."

"You hear that?"

The sound was coming from above, Max was sure of that now. Little cries and whimpers.

"Of course I hear it." She reached over and turned on the bedside lamp. "Must be a raccoon or something, some kind of animal got in the attic."

"What are we going to do?"

"My brave man," Arla said smiling.

"Look, Arla, I'm not big on con-

"I don't see anything," Max whispered.

"Me neither," said Arla. "Watch out, though, raccoons are wily. One might jump out from a corner and spit rabies juice on you."

Max gave her a look, then went over to the crib.

"Arla. Arla, come see this." He pointed down at the crib.

She hurried over. "What, Max?"

"There's an indentation in the mattress. Something's been in the crib."

"Oh, come on. That's just from a box or something."

"I didn't put a box there." He reached over the wooden bars and placed his hand on the spot. Then he took one of Arla's hands and put it there, too.

"It's warm," she said.

"Yeah."

Max was looking past her as he spoke. Arla turned and saw it, too. The attic window was wide open, and something was dangling on the windowsill. Max walked over and picked it up.

"A diaper," he said. A big safety pin with a blue plastic head hung from the corner. At that moment cooing and laughing sounds came from somewhere out in the darkened yard.

Back downstairs Max and Arla sat up in bed.

"You don't really think it's a baby, do you?"

"Arla," Max said. "A crib, crying and laughing, a warm spot on the mattress, and a diaper. We're talking baby."

"Well, how did it get in here?" she said. "It's not like a squirrel or something crawling in under the eaves, you know."

"That's easy," said Max. "The baby came with the crib."

More noises from the attic.

"It sounds awfully busy," said Arla.

"Like more than one baby, doesn't it?"

They listened for a while. The noises grew louder.

"This is ridiculous," Max said. "It sounds like a train station up there."

"Max, look!"

He turned in time to see two pink figures scurry past the window.

Babies crawling past the second floor bedroom window. A sour taste came up from the back of his throat, and Max tried to swallow it back down.

"Arla, get the flashlight. It's under the bed on your side." She found it and they both eased over to the window. There was a lot of shadowy movement



One a.m. No trouble telling time in this house. Max lay in bed listening to three different clocks chime the hour. First the one in the hallway. Then a pause and the one in the living room sounded its deep, somber gong. Finally, the quick, tiny ding of the kitchen clock. He'd bought the clocks for under twenty bucks a piece at a flea market four years back. They were easy enough to fix, mostly just needed cleaning and oiling. He'd probably be awake when they chimed again at two. Seeing your childhood living room through a pair of spooked-out binoculars was not conducive to sleep.

Beside him Arla moved and sighed.

Max heard another faint sound and turned and looked at her. She was still now. Again the sound, this time definitely outside the bedroom. Animal crying in the night? Yet it did not seem to come from outside, but from some-

fronting wild animals in confined spaces. They bite, you know. And spit rabies juice in your wounds."

"Rabies juice, huh?"

"You're coming with me."

They both got up and went out in the hallway. Max hunted around in the closet and found a section of metal tubing from the vacuum cleaner.

"Okay, let's go," he said.

They climbed the stairs to the attic and stood outside the closed door. The sounds were different now, cooing and burbling. Arla slowly pushed open the door, reached her hand in, and felt along the wall until she found the light switch. When the light came on, the cooing stopped.

In the center of the attic, directly under the bare lightbulb stood the crib. Arla and Max looked at it, then their eyes wandered around the room.

Yard SALE

next to the shed. "Shine it over there," Max whispered.

Forty or fifty babies, a small herd of babies in white diapers, froze in the beam from the flashlight. Then, in eerie unison, they turned their little heads and looked up at the source of the light. One of them moved, and the rest instantly followed, scuttling into the woods behind the shed.

Arla held the flashlight shining on the now empty backyard, until Max at last took it from her hand and clicked it off.

"It could be worse, Arla," he said weakly.

She just looked at him.

"I mean, it's only babies. I'd rather have fifty babies out there, than, I don't know, fifty raccoons or something."

"Max, you're not making sense."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean there shouldn't be babies."

"I know that. Come on, Arla. I'm just saying it's not so bad. It's not like they're going to get us or anything. Babies don't get you."

"They shouldn't even be here," she said again.

"I don't hear them upstairs, and they're not in the backyard. They're gone, that's probably the end of it, like a one time sort of thing."

She shook her head. "Right," she said.

They went back to bed and lay there without speaking for a time. The clocks went off again, first in the hallway, then in the living room, then in the kitchen. Two a.m.

"Are you awake?"

"Of course I'm awake. Fifty babies running around outside, and you think I'm asleep?"

"Arla forget the babies. Don't you think we better go check the other stuff?"

"Check it?"

"Yeah. The binoculars and crib turned strange on us. You don't think the other stuff is just sitting down there doing nothing, do you?"

"I don't hear anything," she said after a minute.

"That doesn't mean anything. The binoculars didn't make a noise, either," he said. "Let's go look."

"Since when did you get so brave?"

"Come on, Arla."

"You come on," she said. "Why don't we just wait until morning, then load up the van and take it all back to that old guy?"

"We'll turn on all the lights. It'll be okay. Nothing's going to get us."

"Give me that piece from the vacuum cleaner." She clenched the metal tube and they went out into the hallway. Max turned on a light. They reached the top of the stairs. Not a sound. Max hit a switch and another light came on downstairs. Arla let out her breath—she'd expected babies.

They headed down, Max first, Arla behind him, clutching the hem of his pajama top in one hand, the metal tube in the other. When they reached the bottom, Max stood at the entrance way to the kitchen and flicked the wall switch.

"Uh, oh," he said.

Arla closed her eyes and raised the tube. "What is it?" she whispered.

"The refrigerator."

"The refrigerator?" Arla opened her eyes to little slits and peered over Max's shoulder.

"The refrigerator seems to have gotten inside the house."

The refrigerator Arla's folks had given them four years ago had disappeared, and in its place, as if it had always been there, stood the old Sears Coldspot. It made a little whirring click as it kicked into its cooling cycle, and Max and Arla jumped back.

"What are we going to do?" said Arla.

As Max began to walk toward it, she pulled on his sleeve. "Don't."

"Arla, it's just a refrigerator. It's not going to attack."

"How do you know that? If it got in here, it can move, and if it can move, it can attack."

He pried loose from her and stepped toward it. Nothing happened. He stepped again. Nothing. Then he reached a finger out, slowly, slowly, and barely touched it. The refrigerator just stood there, whirring and clicking.

Max turned to Arla. "See, it's all right."

She moved closer.

Max took hold of the long silver door handle.

"Ooh, I don't think you should be doing that."

"What the hell," he said, and yanked.

For a moment he had no reaction to what he saw, then he grinned.

"Damn," he said. Arla came up behind him. The refrigerator seemed to have an infinite interior, with shelf after shelf of food bathed in theatrical light. Each

item of food glowed—a whole garnished turkey radiated enticingly; a plate of antipasto absolutely sparkled. There were desserts, bowls of fruit, different cheeses, and on the door rack bottles of imported beer and wine, their labels gaudy and inviting.

"Max, shut the door."

He looked at her. "What do you mean? This is great."

"Shut it, Max. That's not what the inside of a refrigerator looks like."

"Who cares? It's all free and it looks great. I'm going to have something." He reached for a plate of fried chicken and started to take a bite from a drumstick.

"No!" Arla slapped the drumstick out of his hand, and they watched as it tumbled end over end slowly, as if it were a weightless object in space. When it finally hit the linoleum floor, blue sparks flashed and snapped as it bounced and settled.

Max slammed the refrigerator shut. He ran his fingers through his hair and shook his head. "If I had bitten into that ..."

"You'd have blown your teeth out of your mouth. Are you satisfied?"

Something moved across Max's line of vision, past the kitchen doorway and down the hall.

"Aw, Christ, now there's something out in the hall. Look."

She looked and caught the tail end of the two flying objects as they whizzed past the doorway.

"Max, let's just stay here in the kitchen. We'll stay until daylight, then get rid of this stuff. Take it all back."

But Max pulled away from her. "I have to see," he said. "I have to see what they are. It's all right, all the lights are on."

"That drumstick had sparks shooting out of it, Max, what's the matter with you? Stay here."

"Come with me," he said. Arla was not about to be left alone. She followed him into the den.

Now it was the fish tank.

There was no water in it, none at all, yet it was filled with fish—angel fish, tiger fish, black mollies, sword-tails, fish with bulging eyes, flamboyant fins, and colorful markings. And the fish at the top of the tank, as if pushed upward by the ones below, rose slowly out into the air, hovered a moment, then darted around the room. Schools of fish began to gather, as like found like. One school glided by the lamp, another swam round and round in sparkling circles in front of the bookcase. Larger fish swam alone, one of them drifting to the corner of the



"The windows, oh, Max, look!" And the babies had returned. They pressed in upon the big bay windows, one baby standing on the next one's shoulders, up and up they went, window after window. As Max and Arla moved around the living room, lost, the babies' heads turned in unison following their movements.

The swing music stopped and a rumba came over the radio, the syncopated rhythm pounding like blows. And then a window slid open, and another, and the babies began to clamber over the sills, dropping into the room. The fish, too, began to stream into the living room. Max and Arla stood motionless on the middle of the oriental rug. The babies made a circle around the two of them, and above the babies the fish formed their own cir-

When Max opened his eyes again some time later, the first thing he noticed were the large bars surrounding him. He jerked his head around, then looked down at himself. The only thing he seemed to be wearing was a piece of white cloth held together by two safety pins with blue plastic heads. He brought his hand up and touched his soft, hairless head. Then he grabbed hold of the bars and pulled himself to a standing position and peered at the fish tank which stood right beside the crib. There was one rather large fish swimming about in the water, butting its head against the green glass.

Arla felt the coldness of the water, the terrifying sensation of being able to move her slender body only from side to side. She butted the glass frantically trying to escape. Then she saw the baby staring at her through the wooden bars of its crib, and stopped swimming.

The fish stared at the baby, the baby at the fish.

The fish shaped its fleshy mouth as if trying to scream, but of course it could not. Instead, tiny bubbles emerged and floated, one by one, to the surface of the water.

The baby made a series of small, unhappy noises, then its tiny face reddened and twisted up. At last, it let loose with a sad and terrible cry—like the cry of babies everywhere who have had their first little scare, and who now understand that the world is not a safe or familiar place, and that in this life there are no bargains. ■

The refrigerator seemed to have an infinite interior. Each item of food glowed.

den to nibble the leaves of a spider plant. A few made their way past Max and Arla, floating off to other rooms.

"There's no end to it," said Arla, moving closer to Max as an angel fish went by her head.

"There doesn't seem to be," he said.

The den was filling up with fish. Larger schools of them were zooming around the room.

"It's time to get out of here, Max. Before something happens."

"What else could happen? The only thing left is the radio."

They looked silently at each other, then winced as an electric force swept through the house. They felt it humming through their bodies, and all the things went out. At the same instant, from the other side of the den, the radio crackled to life.

Max and Arla clutched each other. Then the lights came back on, unnaturally bright, as if floodlights had been placed in all the sockets. The fish were gone. The crackling from the radio grew louder, then gradually cleared and music began to fill the room. It was swing music, music from the forties. Max recognized the big band sound.

"Let's go, Max!" Arla shouted.

They turned, and started out into the hall. The music seemed to follow them, chase them as they made a run for the front door.

They jerked to a stop. The fish were back. A wall of fish blocked the doorway, huge ones, their eyes black and staring, their fleshy mouths agape.

Arla pulled Max into the living room. The music grew wilder, louder. Arla shouted over it.

cle. Then the babies started to move in time to the music, creating a crazy crawling dance in beat with the rhythm of the rumba. Round and round they went, tightening the circle with each revolution. The music, the swirling fish, and babies pressed in. Max and Arla covered their ears and closed their eyes against them.

The music stopped, as if suddenly destroyed by its own reeling intensity. Max took his hands away from his ears. He opened his eyes and looked at Arla, her eyes open now, too.

No fish. No babies.

But in front of them stood the fish tank, and beside it, the crib.

Max felt his eyes slowly closing again, his eyelids moving downward, pressed heavily downward as if they were being forcibly closed. Arla felt it, too, the pressure heavy and irresistible.



THE FLY

David Cronenberg takes on the flawed classic.

by JAMES VERNIERE



In the world of classic cinema, a few images are so powerful that they have taken on a life of their own: the slit eyeball in *Un Chien Andalou* (1929); the burning sled in *Citizen Kane* (1941); the exploding head in *Scanners* (1981); and the piteous, spider-menaced flyman in *The Fly* (1958).

These are examples of film's iconography, and they all speak to us on some primal level. The slit eyeball and the exploding head, although separated by a gulf of more than half a century, are both mutilated portraits of sensory-overloaded twentieth-century mortals. The burning child's sled is a metaphor for one man's heartbreak, an emblem of memory and desire.

It's more difficult at first to pinpoint the flyman's power. One gets the feeling that its impact was perhaps as much a surprise to the filmmakers as to the audience. It's a magical moment, and oddly enough, like most of film's magical moments, it is as painful as it is alluring.

Why? Although its Kafkaesque surrealism—an insect with a human head—is its most striking element, the flyman does not derive all of its power from the grotesque. As horrible as the thing looks, even children recognize

the creature as human. And its human voice crying, "Help me, help me," recalls not only the dying and the terminally ill, but part of our inner selves as well.

If, as Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges says, art is a mirror in which we see our own face, then the flyman has power over us because he is our pathetic twin: trapped, powerless, and at the mercy of nature in the form of a gigantic spider. (Note the similarity to the classic spider scene in *The Incredible Shrinking Man* of 1957.) When the flyman, together with the spider, is crushed in what amounts to an act of euthanasia, we're relieved, not only because it is spared further pain and horror, but because we are spared the sight and sound of it. Only afterward, upon reflection, do we recognize that the message of the flyman is one Camus might have suggested: better off dead than caught in life's web.

If this sounds like one shining, almost serendipitous moment of truth in a lackluster film, it's for good reason. *The Fly* is memorable, but it's no classic. The original, shot in color and directed by Kurt Neumann (*The Return of the Vampire*, *Kronos*, *The She-Devil*) and starring David Hedison and Vincent Price was a low-budget

B-movie (\$350,000) with a convoluted plot written by author James Clavell and based on a short story by George Langelaan. Hedison played a scientist who discovered a matter transmitter, only to have his atoms scrambled with those of a common housefly. The result was two freaks of nature and a film that, as Carlos Clarens points out in his *Illustrated History of the Horror Film*, suffers from a certain lack of logic (why, for example, should a man with a fly's head still think like a man?) and a sluggish pace. The two black-and-white sequels, *The Return of the Fly* (1959) and *The Curse of the Fly* (1965), failed to capture even the first film's modest appeal.

We might expect more, however, from the new Twentieth Century-Fox version being directed by David Cronenberg (*Scanners*, *Videodrome*, *The Dead Zone*). Financed by Brooksfilms and based on a screenplay by Charles E. Pogue (*Psycho III*), it should provide this summer with at least one thoroughly offbeat genre film.

What will make Cronenberg's "*The Fly*" different? For one thing, Cronenberg describes his version, with typical understatement, as "a nature film." But those of us familiar with Cronenberg's penchant for imagery as

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Above: Scientist Seth Brundle (Jeff Goldblum) experiments with teleportation in the buff in the unencumbered Fly of the eighties.

Right: Intent on exposing Brundle's experiments, editor Stathis Borans (John Getz) breaks a bigger story than he expected, while reporter Veronica Quaife (Geena Davis), trapped in the telepod, looks on.



MOVIE
Preview



Above: A terrified Stethis (Getz) goes hand on, uh, changing hand with the rapidly transforming scientist (Goldblum).
 Right: An ambitious actor plays up to the director, but David Cronenberg (right) looks only mildly impressed.



THE FLY



Above: Brundie monitors the effects of his experiment on mind and muscle and is somewhat surprised by the results.
Left: The fly makes its dramatic entrance.





Top: Brundle and Veronica enjoy a day at the market before their love takes its ill-fated turn. **Bottom:** Brundle tests his newfound strength on a brawny bar fly (George Chuvalo) and promptly snaps the fellow's wrist.

(continued from page 50)

graphic as it is grotesque (not to mention the mundane horror of nature films) know that he has much more than a "nature film" in store for us.

For another, he is not trying to duplicate the original. In fact, Cronenberg treaded lightly at first. "I resisted the idea of doing a re-make of anything," he says. "But when I read the script, I realized that this was the real *Fly*. Most people don't remember that most of the action in the first film is related to us in flashback. The other thing is that although the original is remembered with a lot of affection by a lot of people, including me, it's very stodgy and the acting isn't very good. So it's not like doing a re-make of *Citizen Kane*."

Cronenberg says he was particularly impressed by the premise, "the idea of some small, overlooked happenstance having enormous consequences... together with the physically grotesque element. But," he admits, "the original execution left something to be desired. It was like a sketch for another, more fully realized film, which I hope is our film."

If there is one detail that separates Cronenberg's film from the original, it is the manner in which his scientist (played by actor Jeff Goldblum of *The Big Chill* and *Silverado*) is transformed. Rather than feature the metamorphosis of two creatures in a single step, Cronenberg's film will focus on a single creature, the end product of a slow, painful and horribly graphic transformation from human to insect form.

Cronenberg is not, however, trying to duplicate the classic flyman scene: after all, he already has one classic—the exploding head in *Scanners*—to his credit.

Cronenberg is also changing the second most memorable scene from the original, because, as he sees it, it exemplifies the original's primary weakness: its treatment of detail. "It's the point-of-view shot of the transformed scientist looking at his wife, and it's completely wrong," he contends. "You see twenty or so pictures of the same image and that's not how a fly's eye works. It's a terrible design for an eye. A compound eye creates a 360-degree mosaic, each facet being a different tile in the mosaic, and since I was an etymologist as a kid, I knew that show was wrong even then."

In fact, what surprised Cronenberg most when he read Pogue's script was the attention to graphic

detail. "When I rewrote," says Cronenberg, who will probably get a screenplay credit, "I rewrote dialogue and characters. Most of Pogue's details I left alone. And I'm sure when the film comes out people will say that some scenes depicting the fly-ness of the creature are typical of me. But they were there in Pogue's script from the start, which is what attracted me to begin with."

Even so, Cronenberg got to work on *The Fly* almost by default. After the release of his previous film, *The Dead Zone* (1983), arguably one of the best film adaptations of a Stephen King novel, Cronenberg spent thirteen months working on a science fiction thriller called *Total Recall* for Dino De Laurentiis. Twelve screenplay drafts later, he and De Laurentiis parted company amicably, and Cronenberg went on to *The Fly*, lured by producer Stuart Cornfeld (*The Elephant Man*, *Frances*) and the fact that his predecessor had to drop out of the project at the last minute.

Cronenberg (who once expressed a desire to make a film biography of Tod Browning) also talked about why he was drawn to scripts that feature bodily invasion and physical deformity: "You only have to look at the news to see it. For me, film is just a dreamlike surrealist version of reality, and it's my way of coming to terms with those basic things, like death, aging, and disease, which we all deal with every day. If we were watching life from inside our bodies, we'd probably have a different idea of what was beautiful. I don't even think that what I do in my films is more extreme than reality. I just think it illuminates it."

In fact, Cronenberg hopes that what will appear horrible and grotesque at first in his version of *The Fly* will become fascinating and beautiful as audiences get caught up in the transformation of Goldblum's character. "However, there is also an element of pity in the film," he adds, "especially because we have a love story that ends disastrously, but no more tragically than any ordinary marriage or relationship that ends when a partner dies. In fact, for me the surrealism is what makes the film bearable. I find it impossible to watch films about children dying of leukemia. In fantasy we have a kind of distancing mechanism that makes tragedy more bearable, not less."

Actor-turned-screenwriter Charles E. Pogue is somewhat more cir-

cumspect in his assessment of *The Fly* because he doesn't know just how much rewriting Cronenberg has done. In fact, he's never even met Cronenberg. But Pogue, who previously adapted two Sherlock Holmes stories for the screen, and who first read the George Langelaan short story at the behest of his manager, does know why the original film has such a following. "It's a universal classic, like Jekyll and Hyde, man confronting the beast within. But to tell the truth, everybody's memory of the first film is better than the movie."

For special make-up effects expert Christopher Walas (*Scanners*, *Dragonlayer*, *Gremlins*), the challenge was not to "outdo" the original. That was child's play, so to speak. The challenge was to create a variety of effects, gimmicks, and puppets for the elaborate, seven-stage transformation culminating in a fully mechanized creature referred to on the set as "the Space Bug."

"I'm not big on re-makes," says Walas, "because they tend not to be as good as the original, and the effects in the original were relatively effective. They served the purpose. The new version was a challenge, both esthetically and technically, because the metamorphosis is long and expensive, and the actor must act all the way through it."

Walas, like his director, admits that *The Fly* might run into trouble with the censorious MPAA because some of the effects are disturbingly real. "I'm absolutely concerned about that," says Walas. "I'm also concerned about the audience overdosing," he adds, conjuring up the ghost of John Carpenter's re-make of "The Thing" (1982).

Still, Walas adds, "The audience is going to be taken on a relentless roller coaster ride of horror. And once it starts, it doesn't let up." Let's hope that's prophetic. But whether or not Cronenberg's film will be the definitive version of *The Fly* remains to be seen. ■



T.E.D. KLEIN

The former editor of TZ and current full-time novelist looks at the art and sale of horror from both sides of the publishing desk.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY BAUER

T. E. D. Klein, novelist, short story writer, and founding editor of *The Twilight Zone Magazine*, lives in an apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side that is a microcosm of his fiction. On his extensive bookshelves are hundreds of handsome editions of Machen, Lovecraft, Le Fanu, and other classic horror writers alluded to in "The Events at Poroth Farm," Klein's first published short story, and *The Ceremonies*, his best-selling novel. All are indexed so that Klein can easily pluck one down for a needed reference in his fiction or one of his many essays on the genre for such publications as *Writer's Digest*, the *Washington Post Bookworld*, and *The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural*.

Covering the wall next to the kitchen is a floor-to-ceiling photo mural depicting a pastoral lake and forest, a vision which entices us momentarily from the encroaching books, magazines, autographs, and literary bric-a-brac. To the urban man of letters, nature is only a pretty picture, one that in Klein's fiction turns sinister the moment it becomes a reality.

Outside in the muggy spring air are jangling sounds of salsa and portable radios—the sounds of Klein's celebrated novella "Children of the Kingdom"—but occasionally mingled with the middle-class rock-and-roll of an escalating gentrification that was nonexistent when "Children" was first penned six years ago.

When I talked to Klein in the early afternoon, he had just received the

paperback edition of his first short story collection, *Dark Gods*. I caught him stranded, as usual, between a fiction and nonfiction project—an Arkham House introduction and a new horror novel (again set in New York) for Viking. Like his restless, bookish characters, Klein tends to work at night and sleep through much of the morning, a pattern that was harshly interrupted during his six years at *The Twilight Zone* and to which he has gratefully returned. But no matter how wired or strung out (and despite his abhorrence of fan conventions), Klein is a fluent, engaging talker, as provocative as anyone in the field.

TZ: Could you tell us how you broke into the field with your first story, "The Events at Poroth Farm"?

KLEIN: Back in the early seventies I spent a summer on a small farm in New Jersey owned by two friends. Like my protagonist, I read a great many Gothic horror classics there, and I wrote most of the story there as well, with the notion of sending it to August Derleth, founding editor of Arkham House. Toward the end of the summer I drove up to Providence to visit Barton St. Armand, a professor of mine at Brown under whom I'd written a thesis on Lovecraft, and Barton informed me that Derleth had died that July. I didn't have any idea, then, what to do with the story, but Barton had a fanzine called *Nyctalops* lying around, and it happened to be devoted to Lovecraft. Since "Poroth

Farm" was vaguely Lovecraftian, I sent it to the editor, not even hoping he'd publish it, but more as a friendly gesture. To my delight, he ran the story, and from there it was reprinted in an English paperback called *The Year's Best Horror Stories*, which later came out in American edition—and that became the germ of *The Ceremonies*.

TZ: "Poroth Farm" is a long story, and so are your others. I know you tend to write a leisurely kind of tale, but don't you ever worry about a given story's marketability?

KLEIN: I do, but I unfortunately can't control this tendency to write too long. When I was writing "Children of the Kingdom," I knew that Kirby McCauley didn't want something that long. I was groaning as I wrote it, but I just couldn't seem to make it any shorter.

TZ: Isn't it true that some of the great works in the genre—James's "The Turn of the Screw," Le Fanu's "Carmilla," Machen's "The White People"—are novellas? Can't it be argued that the long short story is a perfect form for the genre?

KLEIN: Yes, I think it can. I like novellas myself: they have the unity of a short story, but are long enough to build up the necessary atmosphere. Unfortunately, most editors want either shorter stories or full length novels.

TZ: So unless you're a Fredric Brown or Shirley Jackson—writers who wrote great short-stories—there is a conflict between the aesthetics of the genre and the marketability of short stories in today's marketplace.

KLEIN: That's absolutely true. As editor of *The Twilight Zone*, I was always looking for short-stories to crowd into the magazine. It was strictly a commercial consideration. But I still think that the best kind of scary stories are those that are discursive enough to really create a mood.

TZ: So what kinds of stories did catch your eye as editor of *Twilight Zone*?

KLEIN: I have to admit to a predilection for what I would call "winsome" stories, stories that are gentler, even more sentimental, than most commercial horror fiction—stories that in fact one thinks of as distinctively "Twilight Zone" kinds of stories. They were usually grounded in the here-and-now, because I have little patience with

sword and sorcery, and, with some exceptions, they tended to be stories without a great deal of explicit violence. I think that the needs of the magazine and the *Twilight Zone* tradition coincided with my own taste.

TZ: The roughest story I ever saw under your regime was Ramsey Campbell's "Again."

KLEIN: It's a very rough story. I'd like to think that "Again" is about as rough as the genre gets without degenerating into sheer adolescent grossness. But I could point to a number of other stories that were not what you'd be told on your granny's knee.

TZ: From your perspective as former editor, do you have any advice for young writers seeking to break into print?

KLEIN: It's very hard. Even *A* magazine like *TZ* gets hundreds of submissions, and it's difficult to get noticed. It's been said many times that one's opening page has to be very grabby and well written. You have to bear in mind that it's probably going to be looked at by a grumpy, impatient, overworked reader, one distracted by phone calls and talk, and who may be looking at his watch, and you really have to hold his attention.

TZ: Is there anything in particular a fledgling writer should not do?

KLEIN: I recall being amazed at how many submissions I would get that would literally have a typo or two in the opening sentence.

TZ: That would ruin a writer's prospects, even if the story were faultless otherwise?

KLEIN: Well, it would be like appearing at a job interview with your fly open.

TZ: Do you perceive any major difference between your regime and Michael Blaine's?

KLEIN: I think Michael was a little more open than I was to experimental, avant-garde fiction. I was a little more entrenched in the traditions of the genre, especially in stories of the past. One of the pleasures of editing the magazine was the chance to reprint wonderful stories I'd read ten or twenty years ago and wanted to see in print again. But I think that in

general our tastes were in agreement.

TZ: Do you have any concerns about the future of the magazine?

KLEIN: *TZ* has always maintained a balance between fiction, Serling-related material, and movie pieces. It's a balance that's kept the magazine afloat, and I hope it's never tampered with. I would be particularly upset if the fiction level dropped below what it is now. Above all, I hope we never begin trying to appeal to the lowest common denominator. I was always happy that the average *TZ* reader was someone in his or her late twenties.

TZ: And even thirties, according to recent surveys.

KLEIN: That's good to hear. But there's always commercial pressure to aim more for high school readers. High school, admittedly, is where I did the bulk of my reading in the genre, but I wouldn't want to aim for that audience.

TZ: Looking beyond the magazine to the genre as a whole, are there any current trends that concern you?

KLEIN: It's often said that the genre is enjoying a state of health right now, but I have to say that I find myself bored and turned off by much of what passes for current horror fiction. I do see it as over-explicit and a bit "sick." In some ways the pleasures of modern horror seem to be encroaching more than ever on the pleasures of pornography. I'm also not very keen on illustrated horror, a trend that seems very popular just now. It forces you to see the story through an alien point of view, and I feel it tends to cheapen the work. In fact, the ideal issue of *The Twilight Zone* would, for me, be one without illustrations.

TZ: Could you give an example of the kind of horror you deplore?

KLEIN: The other day I was walking along a street, and I saw all these people with their little Walkmans on their heads, and they all had their little earphones on, and I had this stray, sadistic thought: what if their earphones, under some kind of evil spell, suddenly began squeezing their skulls together in a vise-like grip? Now that's the kind of silly fantasy that some horror writers would get excited about and work into a story, or maybe even make the climax of a story, whereas

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Brahms' Ballady

There were mysteries in the manuscript, mysteries in the music, and a mystery behind the piano.

by E. W. SMITH

When Brahms died, all Vienna mourned. His music was played constantly for months then its application wore away—diminuendo.

At No. 4 Karlsgasse, his housekeeper and her son eventually gave up their black. The favorite nicked and battered tin soldier on the mantelshelf was left at attention, never lifted by them from its station, which would have dispelled the illusion of a redcoated sentinel and reduced it to a toy. No, they did not disturb it, they would not finger it, however fond their touch might be. Hearing the master's piano, the master's little waltz, they would look up brightly at the tin soldier, and that was all. The woman who helped Frau Truxa with the cleaning, however, dusted it as vigorously as she did the clock and candlesticks.

Bauer noticed it while waiting for Frau Truxa. When she came in, he had the soldier in his hand, hefting it. It was a small figure, but heavy as a paperweight.

"Do you have children, Frau Truxa?" he asked, holding up the tin soldier. She hovered her tray over a table and indicated that he should move the stand nearer the sofa, which he did in quick energetic steps. Not until the tray was set down did she reply.

"My son is grown and away now," she said, "but that was a toy he played with when

he was a boy. He called my dear master Onkel Brahms. Many children did, for Herr Brahms was very fond of children. He always had something in his pockets for them. Tin soldiers he liked himself and would march them in formation like any boy." Frau Truxa poured the coffee. "We remember him best by that little soldier, I think. He was gruff at times, but within him there was something to which children especially could respond."

Bauer nodded appropriately as she spoke, issuing a thank you for his coffee and kitchen. He had to seem interested and polite. He regarded the tin soldier, now standing at attention on the table, and tried to look at it reverentially.

"And so, you are a disciple of Brahms," Frau Truxa said. He realized she was inviting him to lead the conversation where he wished. He took a deep breath and began.

"I have worshipped his music all of my life—Beethoven and Brahms. When I was a student, they were my teachers, in a sense. I looked to their music to show me the way, beyond what my professors taught me." He sighed into his hollow coffee cup.

"You are a pianist?" she asked, refilling his cup and starting him off again.

"Not professionally. And, of course, compared to Brahms, I am nothing!" He leaned closer to her, lowering his voice to a fanatic's whisper. "I heard him once, you know. In



Waltz

Hamburg." He allowed his eyes and voice to catch fire. "It was the greatest moment of my life." He let his cup rattle in its saucer. Speaking with emotion, he told her of his boyhood dreams. He felt his way, charming her with his exuberance, returning repeatedly to admiration of Brahms, her dear master. "I feel very close to him. You see, my mother was a cousin to an aunt of Clara Schumann. I often think, if the family had stayed closer together, I might have met Brahms in person, been on intimate terms even. It is the great regret of my life that such an opportunity was missed."

Frau Truxa quite understood.

In the succeeding moment of respectful silence, the muffled strains of a piano took over Bauer's consciousness. He listened attentively. The notes were curiously choppy, but the tune was unmistakable. Tah-ta-tee-tah-tah. Brahms' famous little waltz, a charming melody. Enchanting. Haunting. Frau Truxa moved the small silver spoon in the sugar bowl a fraction of an inch to the left, then right.

"Your son?" Bauer asked.

"No," she said, hesitating. But he looked so interested, and he loved Brahms so. He had written such sensitive, respectful letters asking if he might come to speak with her about the master. She decided. "Come," she said and rose from her chair. He got up sharply, knocking over the tin sentinel, which he picked up with deference and replaced on the mantel before following Frau Truxa from the room.

She led him through the house and paused before the dark-grained doors separating them from the music, the strange choppy notes of which continued to be heard. She looked at Bauer closely, worriedly, but he smiled his encouragement. She slid the doors open, and they passed through.

It was the master's music room, full of light, and friendly. The grand piano stood to the right of the door. Bauer could not immediately see who was playing. The pianist was hidden by the raised lid of the piano and a halo of sunshine, but Bauer could see a fringe of movement. He drew closer, stopping in abrupt surprise. In the mist of sunshine that beamed through the window, just now completing the last

strains of the waltz, was a golden brown wallaby.

The small kangaroo ended the piece and looked directly at Bauer, taking notice of the intruder by moving its head sideways quickly, as if Bauer's energetic manner had jumped into its own body. Large dark eyes smiled Bauer. Then the wallaby studied—Bauer could swear it smiled—and it started to play a Bach fugue. Only after playing a few bars did the creature look away, quickly again, Bauer-like.

"The master never told us where it came from," Frau Truxa said at his elbow, making him start. "We think that one of his friends, a violinist who was touring, sent it to him as a joke. They always enjoyed a joke with each other." Bauer could only stare in fascination at the wallaby. Its thin arms swept back and forth, the underarm webbing taut with the player's intensity. It stood on the bench, its small golden body hunched over the keyboard, which explained the choppy quality of the playing. Bauer told himself. The wallaby could not reach the pedals.

Frau Truxa knew almost nothing about the wallaby. It had been with Brahms for years. They had not realized its talent until after the master's death, but on his deathbed Brahms instructed them to take care of the creature and give it the run of the house, just as if the wallaby were one of the family. They had respected his wishes. And, really, the wallaby was no trouble. It was a strange creature, but gentle, playing so nicely, playing only Bach fugues—Brahms always stressed the importance of Bach—and of course that little waltz by the master himself.

Bauer was to stay at No. 4 Karlsgasse several days, each day gaining in his assault on Frau Truxa's confidence. He listened patiently to her reminiscences, even the stories about herself in her youth before she became housekeeper to Brahms. He saw the master's bedroom, touched humbly his writing pens and was given one to keep. He played for her many of Brahms' compositions and sang lieder in his untrained tenor.

At first, the wallaby disconcerted Bauer. The music room was its haunt, and it watched knowingly, rather roughly, whenever Bauer entered. The fugues were perpetual accompaniment to Bauer's search. They could be heard in every room in the house, and Bauer searched every room while Frau Truxa did her shopping.

"No," Frau Truxa answered his questioning. "My master destroyed all his manuscripts, his papers, just before he died—tore them in pieces and burned them. He was very private, and he felt some compositions were not good enough for the public to have."

"But, Frau Truxa, even the smallest sketches of a great artist have value."

"Yes," she said. "You mean as a record, a history. I see what you mean." Bauer smiled and looked away while she bent her head kindly to him and continued. "But we must accept a man's wishes in these matters. It is for him to judge by what he shall be known. If he prefers to keep certain things hidden, it is for the best, I am sure."

"Hidden!" Bauer could not help muttering, but he obscured this with a cough, adding quickly, "Could he judge, Frau Truxa? Your master may have been too modest about his work."

"Modest!" The good woman exclaimed. "For him there is no such concept in music. He knew when what he did was good and what should speak for him. In life, perhaps—about himself as a man, yes—he was modest. He did not think himself a great man. His clothes were old, out of fashion. He wore a coat until it was patches, and his trousers were always too short and hung like sacks. Then after he had been ill, the last year, they were no longer too short, but still, like sacks!" She leaned back in her chair away from Bauer, speaking toward him. "I used to put tucks in them, in his trousers, not telling him, so he would think he was getting better, regaining weight and health. Several times I put tucks in them. But he knew." She looked at the tin soldier standing its watch on the mantel. "He knew very well, and he wanted to keep the sad truth from me."

She was weary and silent after that and soon excused herself, retiring for the night. Bauer frowned into the fireplace. He frowned at the tin sentinel. Seeing his reflection in the mirror, he frowned even more deeply at that.

Brahms' wallaby was playing again, the little waltz, and Bauer went to join it in the music room. The wallaby hunched over the keyboard, a plaid shawl of the master's around its shoulders fastened at the neck. It did not look up as Bauer entered, but when he crossed and sat down in a nearby chair preparing to frown at the carpet,

the wallaby caught his eye. Not roguish this time, but interested, although it seemed to enjoy Bauer's discomfort. Then, after sniffing toward something atop the piano, looking down its nose at a pile of torn white paper, the wallaby buried itself in a fugue.

Bauer stood up quickly, almost losing his balance, his abrupt energies restored. In swift steps he reached the piano. Each torn square of paper had music written on it. Bauer's eyes devoured the precious scraps until his hands could gobble them up. He wheeled around and, like a marionette, elbows and knees working stiffly, he scurried out the door. The wallaby kept playing.

"You should eat now, Herr Bauer. You had no dinner last evening and this morning no breakfast. Are you ill?" No, Bauer had merely not slept well, that was all. He smiled weakly at Frau Truxa through heavy eyes and accepted from her a tray of coffee and kuchen, as he had on the day of his arrival. He glanced about the front room, which had really been very pleasant, with garrulous old Frau Truxa and the comfortable hearth. Yes, the sentinel was still on the mantel, but—Bauer blinked sleep away and looked. The tin soldier had its back to him. That cleaning woman had no sense.

"I am sorry you must leave us today," Frau Truxa said.

"I regret it also, Frau Truxa," he consoled her, "but business affairs..." Bauer trailed off, his taxed brain too tired to invent complicated stories. The night had been long. The lands of the midnight sun could measure no longer night than the one he had endured putting together a jigsaw puzzle from torn scraps of paper. And when it was over! Bauer remembered that earlier elation and patted his pocket confidently. Only one scrap of paper was missing—one insignificant scrap from the bottom of the last page—but the composition itself was intact.

His shoes were enormously fascinating when he told Frau Truxa that he had to leave. He watched with interest when his shoes hungrily lapped the carpet in quick licks leading him to the wallaby, which he wanted to see once more before departing.

In the music room, the wallaby's dark eyes and nose were a more potent enchantment. Its tan little face seemed to point at him as it continued a fugue. Then the creature smiled and nuzzled its nose into the red and green plaid shawl which it still wore about its shoulders. Bauer thought he heard a tinny laugh and moved closer. Lean-

ing toward the plump ball in plaid, Bauer whispered like a conspirator into the small tufted ear, "A string quartet! Unpublished, unknown until now, a Brahms string quartet. I shall be famous. And I shall be rich."

The wallaby seemed to chuckle, but with its eyes cast down and its mouth hidden, Bauer could not be sure.

Striding quickly through the house and into the hall, Bauer failed to notice his portmanteau. Blundering into it, he lost balance, tipping a table in his attempt to stay on his feet. The contents of the table, a few books and the day's mail, sailed to the floor.

"They must put these things where a man cannot help but collide with them," he grumbled, yet he was not too annoyed. Smiling, he stopped to pick up the objects that had fallen from the table, jabbing his hands at the letters, but the handwriting on one of the envelopes stalled him, turned him into a statue. He had seen that script before. He had stared at that script all night piecing together scraps of a composition in that very hand, and here it was again on a letter addressed to Frau Truxa and delivered that very morning.

"Here you are, Herr Bauer," the good woman said to him. "I have made up some packages for your journey. Fruit in this one, rolls in this. You will be hungry traveling." She placed them on the table. "Ah, a letter from my son," and taking up the envelope that had so recently startled Bauer, she calmly proceeded to the front room to read her mail. Bauer roused himself and hastened after her, questioning her closely.

Yes, her son wrote music sometimes, but he had not much talent after all. He wrote music and yet did not write music, she said and would have continued, but Bauer had no time for nonsense. He had to know if she had anything, a letter or anything, written by Brahms. It would mean so much to him to see something in the master's own hand. He had never seen any of his actual writing, and one could know a man from his handwriting, was that not so?

Frau Truxa found a book and showed the fly leaf. A date, a few notations, and the signature, Johannes Brahms. It was quite a unique script. Quite unlike any other Bauer had seen.

"Will you—" but Frau Truxa stopped speaking and moved to the mantel piece, where she turned the tin soldier to face them. "Will you be saying goodbye to—" she paused.

Yes, Bauer must bid farewell to the wallaby, and he strode woodenly into

the music room. A fire had been lit in the grate. The crackling did not disturb the wallaby, whose eyes were closed, a look of enchantment on its face as it continued a fugue. Bauer drew forth the papers he had spent a weary night assembling. Crumpling them with great loathing, he laid them on the fire, where the flames soon danced around their edges. A few ministrations with a poker, and the papers were quickly consumed. When Bauer looked up from his task, the wallaby's eyes were twinkling.

Brushing a bit of ash from his coat, Bauer returned to the front room, where Frau Truxa was finishing her letter.

"I wish you could have met my son," she told him, waving the thin, neatly written sheets. "The one who wrote music but did not write music. A little family joke."

The good woman laughed, and as Bauer brushed another spot of ash from his coat she explained. Her son sometimes helped Onkel Brahms by copying music over for him. The master liked to have perfect copies of his music, without blots or smears. So untidy in person, but about his music, so particular. Her son was very pleased to be trusted with this and would spend hours contentedly copying a manuscript, taking as much care as if it were his own. When he finished a piece, he would stand tall and straight, like a soldier, waiting for the master's approval. Onkel Brahms would smile, for he knew how young people needed such things, and he would sign his name on the last page, to make it official, as he said. Frau Truxa's son would be happy for days. And the master, he would smile, as he smiled years later when he stood before her in his trousers with the tucks in them.

"Perhaps if you return, you will meet my son," she said, but Bauer had vanished.

Elbows and knees pumping strenuously but without accord, he hastened once more to the music room. The little pointed face smiled kindly when he entered, giving a short sniff toward something on the piano, a scrap of paper, just such a piece as was missing from the bits so carefully assembled in the night. On this scrap, a piece from the bottom corner of a page, the name Johannes Brahms was written in the master's unique script.

The wallaby snuggled its nose into its shawl and began the familiar waltz. Bauer could still hear it when the door to No. 4 Karlsgasse closed behind him. ■

CHILD OF THE CENTURY

*These days, there's no accounting
for what's on tv, or in it.*

by ELIZABETH GRAHAM MONK

Midge Rowans was an energetic, comfortable-looking woman in her sixties whose thick glasses sparkled with the blue shine of her eyes. She had her garden and her knitting, plus a few friends, so, after her husband's death four years ago, she managed without much trouble during the day. The hard times were the nights. Usually, she relied on television.

Tonight, she decided to watch a documentary on world starvation. She wanted to watch the program because she felt that she should. She stacked the dinner dishes in the dishwasher and went into the living room. She ran the dishwasher only twice a week, except when her two sons and their families visited. These visits were hectic, almost stressful occasions, but when she saw snapshots showing their happy smiles she was always amazed at how much fun everyone really had.

No matter what the season of the year, the picture window seemed too dark too soon, and the light from the lamps never bright enough. A weariness came over her, and she almost couldn't finish closing the drapes. Then, as sometimes happened, strange thoughts sneaked into her brain. She started thinking about the different ways time felt. How, she wondered, tugging at the slack cord, could time

Robert



ILLUSTRATION BY WARREN GEBERT

CHILD OF THE CENTURY

feel so slow and, just as they said, hang heavy and creep with relentless sameness, when it used to fly by, and why did the past seem so magical when it had been ordinary enough? Her hands fumbling the cord, she frowned, lost in abstraction, and her thoughts got even crazier: Why did people take sides and have wars? How could anyone kill another person? Why didn't people just love? When she caught herself asking these unanswerable questions, she jerked the drapes completely closed, creating a soft white barrier against the night, and hurried to the television.

The television was an expensive new one in a handsome walnut cabinet. She justified its purchase because her fanciful musing persisted and because she was plagued by an obscure oppression that would not go away. She kept hoping the new television would help.

After flicking it on and finding the channel, she settled into the couch.

The documentary had already begun. An authoritative, omniscient voice entered the living room like a friend, while on the screen a parade of frightening strangers appeared: wretched, scantily clothed, and shriveled bodies that seemed barely human. Although she had seen photographs and similar documentaries, she became appalled as she watched. The bodies were sluggish and the faces impassive, with dull, lightless eyes. The children had the familiar balloon bellies.

Midge could not stop watching, and not just because she was ashamed of her boredom. The compelling voice gripped her, and she felt mesmerized by the display of tedious misery. Only when eating did the figures come alive, with quick, jerky movements, and then their eyes, eyes that had too much white, darted around. Seated in huddled groups, each acted as if alone and avoided looking at the others.

Why am I watching this? Midge thought, suddenly aware that her mouth gaped open. She felt that the voice promised something. Then she decided that the voice, which had seemed so friendly and rational, was definitely seductive.

She was about to change the

channel when the face of a child, five or six years old, appeared on the screen. Poor little thing, she thought. Then, irritated at herself for this outburst of sentimentality, she started toward the set, but stopped aghast when the child's head filled the screen and grew big, so big it seemed three-dimensional, and for a minute, seemed to bulge out, as if in a birth. Then there was no *seem* about it; the head actually protruded from the television set, and Midge stood staring as the rag-covered shoulders followed, wriggling through. Freed, the arms sprang

**The head
protruded
from the
television set,
and then the
shoulders
followed,
wriggling
through.**

up, and small brown hands, gripping the cabinet, hauled the rest of the body out. The child tumbled headfirst to the carpeted floor with a shrill cry. It lay a moment before scrambling to its feet.

All she could think was, *There's no broken glass.* She looked down at the child, but the presence in her living room was too strange to take in; it was somehow easier to think about the lack of broken glass and the miraculous fact that the child wasn't even scratched. She bent over to touch the screen. The glass was thick, with a curved smoothness. She tapped and rubbed, then hit it so hard her palms stung. The glass was intact. The television was grey and silent except for a low, monotonous hum.

"I'm hungry."

When finally she turned her attention to the child, her first thought was to wonder what sex it was. The dark hair fell in long matted strands. A dingy, tattered pajama top drooped over its swollen belly to its knees. She did not like to stare, as the child was

watching her closely. The child was all brown skin and big dark eyes. About half her height, it stood very still but seemed ready to move in any direction. Although zombie-like, it also gave an impression of agility.

"I'm hungry."

When still she did nothing, the child repeated in a louder voice, "I'm hungry," and at last she reacted.

"How stupid of me," she said, automatically falling back on the facile social manner she had always possessed.

"I'll get you something. Right away."

She even managed a stiff smile that hurt her face. "We'll go into the kitchen. We'll find something for you to eat." *I sound like a nurse.* She reached out and tugged its hand gently. "Come with me." Nearing the child, she was suddenly sick; the child reeked and, without thinking, she let go and stepped back. Her hand was tinged with traces of grime from the contact. She forced herself to take the hand again. *After the meal, a bath.*

"Come on," she said, but when she pulled the small bony hand harder the child balked. At once she realized that the child not only did not understand her words, but also did not trust her. Perhaps it had not said, "I'm hungry." It had uttered what now, in retrospect, sounded like gibberish, but might have been another language. Had she assumed it was communicating hunger because she did not know what to do with the child besides feed it?

"I'm hungry."

This time she knew, *knew* it meant food. She prodded the skeletal shoulders, urging it to the kitchen. Suddenly docile, the child padded on bare feet across the carpet to the kitchen's linoleum, where it began to prance. The blank look vanished and a half-smile lit the child's face. *The linoleum,* she thought. The floor must feel wonderfully smooth to the child, who ceased dancing to paw its feet back and forth, humming a wordless droning noise.

Good. The linoleum floor would keep the child amused while she fixed a meal. From the living room another hum droned; she wished she had turned the television off. She knew that starving people should not eat too much at first. Bouillon should be good, and milk—yes, she'd heard somewhere that milk was good for an empty stomach. Then, as she set water on to boil, she remembered the left over roast lamb in the refrigerator.

Her mind, shrinking from the fantastical reality, ran for safety among practical concerns, helped make everything somewhat normal, and gradually her daze lifted. She mashed two bouillon cubes in a bowl and poured in the boiling water.

A sudden commotion. She glanced up sharply. The child was yanking a drawer. When the drawer resisted, the child pulled angrily, shaking and rattling it. She was wondering whether she should do something when the drawer slid shut with a thud, and the child made a gleeful noise very much like a laugh. The drawer was repeatedly opened and closed with a racket. She even smiled, for the child's happiness was a delight to see. Now everything seemed safer.

As soon as the child grew bored with lurching the drawer about violently, she led it to the kitchen table. Then she fetched the bowl of bouillon. A second later, after she reproached herself for forgetting a spoon, she suppressed giggles at her civilized silliness. She was feeling better. Picking the bowl up from the table, the child tilted its head back and drained the broth. In that pose, the child looked appealing, like other children. The dark eyes glowed, and the hair that had formerly seemed matted now fell in luxuriant waves. She also noted that it was stronger than she had imagined. Not only was her first impression—that the child was agile with lithe movements—accurate, but the bicep muscles were like round stones. She was sure the child was a boy.

Now what? More bouillon? No, that might be too much liquid. She would make a sandwich and get milk.

The child returned to the drawers, pulling out the whole row and slamming them all back. Thank heavens the child did not empty them. She took the meat from the refrigerator and cut slices with her best carving knife. She made a sandwich, and again almost giggled when, out of habit, she was about to add salt and mayonnaise. She poured a glass of milk. Her hands were amazingly steady. She must be over her fright.

As she hadn't been in charge of children for a long time, she had forgotten the need to constantly check on them. The minute she turned around, a set of mixing bowls crashed to the floor. The child cried out.

It trembled and whimpered. She grabbed the child under the arms and lifted it from the pile of debris. When she put the child down next to the kitchen table, she knelt to hug it and a

warmth pervaded her. Strangely, she no longer noticed the smell. He was sweet, she thought, a child like any child, and she would not use 'it' any more in referring to him. She would assume the child was male even if she might be wrong.

She stroked him tenderly, saying over and over, "You're okay. You're not hurt. You're okay." He clutched at her, burying his head in her chest. She smiled to herself when, after a while, she recognized the unmistakable sound of fake sobs. She stroked his back, and he forced hiccoughs and sighs. Children never changed. She might adopt him. Then she would be able to relive her happiest years. Raising this child would be an entirely new and different experience. His false cries began to sound like hard work and he plucked at her glasses, then poked the lenses. In the peremptory voice she'd sometimes assumed with her sons, she said, "You're okay. Everything is okay," and pulled away. Children could cry forever if you made it worth

knife, sawing at the roast. How had he moved across the kitchen without her hearing? She watched, trying to decide what to do. Should she do nothing? Unlike the linoleum and the drawers, the child was apparently familiar with knives and carved with a certain amount of skill, his face stern with concentration.

He underwent another transformation. Just as he had changed from a zombie to a exotic creature, then to a helpless, adorable child, he now appeared intelligent and quite adult. By the ease with which he handled the knife, carving carefully around the bone, she was certain that he really was a boy. But he was cutting huge chunks of meat, and she should not allow him to overeat.

She leaned against the counter, wondering about the best thing to do. She might anger the child if she took the meat. But why was she afraid of a child's anger? She must be apprehensive because he was not really civilized.



their while.

She placed the sandwich on the table. He hesitated before taking it and, although some of the meat fell out, he chewed steadily. He gobbled with big, fast bites. She went to collect the whisk broom and dust bin.

Stooped down, she picked up the large broken pieces and dropped them in the wastebasket, then swept up the shards. The small, shattered bits of china seemed to multiply and were scattered over a wide area. The job so absorbed her attention that again she was too late in checking on the child. He stood by the counter holding the

From the living room, the television emitted irregular crackles of static and a stampee of hums.

For the first time, she thought about phoning for help. No, that was a cowardly idea. And even if she knew a place to phone, there was no time for it. Later she could track down an organization and make some arrangements, but for now the child was her responsibility. Probably he would not mind if she took only some of the meat away. But she would have to act soon; he had already consumed a lot. He shoved the meat into his mouth, his jaws working like a

CHILD OF THE CENTURY

machine. She must not snatch the food; that would startle anyone. The television was an annoyance. She would turn it off as soon as possible. It was still emitting loud, penetrating static and hums. Something was wrong with the set.

She would talk to the child. Even if he did not understand exactly what she said, he would understand that she meant well if her voice was soft and kind.

"All that food," she began, as she approached him, "it's not good for you. Not yet, anyway. In a few days, you can eat all you want, but not now."

She went on talking as she scooped up slices of meat from the counter. He watched her with a quizzical expression, but kept on eating. "In a while you can eat whatever you want, but you have to build up your strength gradually . . . I'll go to the store and buy lots of things: roast beef—that's even better than leg of lamb—vegetables and fresh fruit. Things that are good for you; and after a while you'll even be able to have things that aren't so good for you."

Once she started to talk, she could not stop, and she heard herself getting gabby. "I'll make you pies," she prattled, clenching and unclenching the meat. "I used to be good at pies. When it's berry season, we can go pick berries together and see if I remember how to make pies."

Finally she trailed off. He had finished the meat she had left for him and was reaching for the pieces in her hand. Instinctively, she transferred the meat to one hand and withdrew it behind her back. Slowly, with solemn emphasis, she shook her head, saying, "No. Not today. Not good for you."

He looked up at her and frowned. Again he held out his hand, and she stepped back, keeping the meat hidden. Suddenly he grinned, a spark dancing in his eyes. *Oh, dear God, he thinks this is a game.* She retreated further, and his expression changed to sullen confusion.

In the silence that fell between them, the noises of the television increased, crackling and murmuring ominously. Words stuck in her throat. Her heart was loud and her head

spun. She wanted to scream. Then she thought, *This is ridiculous. He is only a child.* She had simply gotten into a tricky situation. If he overate, he would recover. She was about to give him the meat when he grabbed the carving knife. He raised the knife to her chest. She dropped the meat to the floor. He moved closer, glaring up at her as he brandished the long, shiny knife. He thrust the knife toward her several times and she stepped on, then over, the spongy pieces. Watching her, his eyes glittering and narrow, he bobbed down after the meat.

Slowly backing away across the kitchen, she flattened herself against the oven. All she could think about were her glasses. He had slid down her nose, so the world was vague shapes and blurred colors. If she

**If only she
could shove
him back into
the tv the
way Hansel
and Gretel
had shoved
the witch into
the oven.**

couldn't see, she wouldn't have a chance. In desperation, she pushed the glasses up and clamped them to her temples. Once she saw the boy and the knife clearly, it occurred to her to run.

Her soiled shoes slipped on the linoleum and seemed to stick to the living room carpet. She started for the front door, but he was there, gliding into the living room. Charged with a powerful force, his thin, athletic body walked through the wall as it dissolved to open a perfect silhouette for him. He smiled in triumph, obviously loving his power, and did not even glance at her as he hummed to himself. The hum was loud, but musical

compared to the television. She checked her glasses; they were still on, fitting snugly. Then, with the knife shining in his hand, he slipped into the television set and disappeared. The grey, blank set went on humming.

As she stood and watched the television, she feared that she was cracking up. Her body grew rigid. She was cold and shaking. She wiped her greasy hands on her dress, but the cold sweat of her palms kept reappearing.

Then the television screen rippled so fast that it was hard to tell if the movement had really happened. First his brown feet, then his legs, then all of him scrambled out onto the carpet. She was almost glad to see him. When he ignored her, she thought, *He takes me for granted, and, oddly enough, she liked that fact.*

Seconds later, though, he again seemed a monster, and what she saw was so unbearable that she stared spellbound.

He slashed the couch, stabbing and ripping with the knife until the pretty cretonne cover was shredded and the stuffing oozed in billowing tufts. He gouged out the fluff in fistfuls. Next, he tried eating patches of the cretonne material and spat that out, his whole body seeming to shrug in disgust. Then he wandered around, wrecking things in fits and starts, until his good humor returned. Gallivanting with grunts and whoops that had a grotesquely comical resemblance to a child playing, he stabbed at everything within his reach. He upended a table and, setting the knife aside, tore off the legs. The splintering of wood sounded like groans. He lifted one of the legs and gnawed on it like an enormous, polished bone. He then threw the leg down and kicked it in fury, but when he took up the knife again, his spirits cheered horribly. He proceeded to destroy the whole room, using his teeth as well as the knife until the wood, the upholstery, even the walls had bite marks and gashes. The carpet looked as if it had been attacked by a pack of dogs. The drapes sprawled on the floor in ragged heaps. He paused, glancing around restlessly.

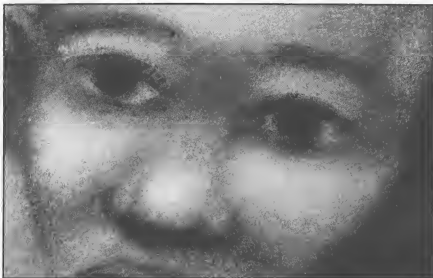
Eerily, the television was the only furniture left unscathed. Standing behind it she heard a voice. The voice, chipper and glib, seemed the lunatic jabbering of another enemy. Her body swayed, and she almost sank into a faint. Her hands flew to her throat and fidgeted with her glasses. She gazed through the picture window at the lights in the neighbor-

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ing houses. The houses were still there. The stars were in the sky, too. How small they were. The boy paced about the room. The television jabbered on. Then the boy looked straight into her eyes, finally registering her presence. A thrill of fresh alarm shot through her. He resumed his pacing, making haphazard jabs at the ruined furniture. He left the television alone. He did not treat the television with any reverence; he just ignored it as he again ignored her. But she found herself angry at the television for standing whole and pristine amidst the rubble. She blamed the television for the boy's invasion into her

lamps, but, terrified of making a mistake, she had an irrational impulse to yank out all the plugs. As she crouched, she lost her balance, almost falling. Her brain buzzed with uncertainty. Could her problem be solved by just a flick of the switch? If she disconnected the lamps she wouldn't be able to see . . . Her hands were wet and shaky. *Stop thinking*, she told herself. Then she yanked out the plugs.

Instantly, the television was silenced. The room dimmed, lit only by a little light from the kitchen. She looked for the boy. The room was full of dark shapes. Was he gone? She had to be sure. The light from the kitchen was too weak. There was no sound or movement. Still, she did not feel safe. The television must remain unplugged. She had to turn on the lamps, but was afraid she might accidentally start the television. She snatched up the brown cord and followed it to the television.



life. If only she could shove the boy back into the television the same way Hansel and Gretel had shoved the witch into the oven! The thought gave her an idea.

She shrank along the window. Her breath was fast and shallow. She pressed a hand on her heart in an attempt to silence the loud beats. She headed to the opposite end of the room. All the while, she kept her eyes on the boy, who remained oblivious to her. Her right shoulder tight against the cold glass pane, she tiptoed unsteadily to the corner and quickly stopped down to the electric outlet. Hesitating, she hitched up her glasses. She knew perfectly well that the brown cord belonged to the television and the white cords were for the

lamps. She coiled the cord and placed it on top. When she plugged the lamps back in, the silent room was empty.

She searched the whole house, turning on lights. Her walk had gotten peculiar. Stiff with fright, she moved in a jerky, sideways manner, unable to straighten her shoulders. She felt she couldn't see, and she constantly fumbled with her glasses, poking at the lenses, leaving smudges.

All that night she sat sleepless on the battered couch, with the lights on in every room. Her body curled inward, making itself as small as possible, trying to hide. She rocked back and forth, and her head ducked involuntarily as if to avoid objects dropped from above. She was filled with a heavy, grinding deadness. She mut-

tered in rage until her thoughts were too wild for words and she could only moan.

When the white dawn came, she still sat hunched over. She noticed that her hand was patting the arm of the couch and stopped. To her surprise, the wreckage of the room was not disturbing. It did not seem important now. She remained sitting and let the sun warm her. She wiped her glasses on a tattered bit of cretonne.

Gingerly, for she felt very breakable, she rose. Walking in small, careful steps, afraid to hope, she went to the television and picked up the brown cord. Excited now, she walked quickly and, before she could change her mind, bent down to the outlet.

The television came to life as soon as she plugged it in. She forced herself to face it. Her hands rubbed each other hard. She watched two well-groomed people, a man and a woman with chipper voices, and waited. She did not have to wait long. This time, the boy was propelled from the set and fell dexterously, jumping to his feet, the knife held loosely in his hand. A strange feeling pierced her, so painful and unfamiliar that for a moment she was unable to recognize it—a shock of fierce joy. Tears wet her trembling cheeks.

She tagged after him to the kitchen and opened the refrigerator. He squatted down in front of it, still holding the knife, and stacked food on the floor. She squeezed around him to get out eggs for their breakfast, while he stayed squatted on the floor with an odd assortment of food—a head of lettuce, packages of cheese, a ketchup bottle, and some apples. She wanted to take and hide the knife, but he pounded its handle and chanted while he ate, trying one thing, then another. The chant began to sound like singing. The butter sizzled in the pan, and she stirred in the eggs, scrambling them.

Her mind was as busy as her hands. She told him of her plans. Somehow, she would have to make him presentable enough to take him to the store today. There was not enough food in the house for them both, and she could not leave him alone. "Not yet," she said. She got out two plates and plastic cups and poured orange juice.

He kept singing and drumming the knife handle on the floor. She put a plate of eggs and toast and the glass of juice down beside him as he beat the knife in a rhythm, chanting and humming a new kind of music, strange and beautiful. ■

SUMMER WILL RISE

He looked at it under the magnifying glass.
It was growing. Emma knew it was time
to cut it off. But she loved it so.

by JOHN HERRMANN

Summer will rise till the houses fear;
streets will hear underground streams;
this is the town where the wind will come.
The trees will hear, farther than winter,
over the town a coming of birds.
What great wild hands will reach them?
—William Stafford

Emma awoke nameless and
insubstantial, wandering from
her dream into the flat, dead
sound of her bedroom. When
finally she reluctantly opened
her eyes, she saw the grey face of her
husband peering down at it. The skin
of his face frightened her.



SUMMER

"Has it grown?" she asked.

"I can't tell. No, I don't think so." He touched it with the tip end of his thumb. She felt nothing. The growth was without feeling, except where it was attached, just above her left breast. And sometimes in the middle of the night she felt a small aching there if she'd been sleeping on her stomach.

"I'll get a magnifying glass today," he told her. "I saw them on sale at the pharmacy. If there are any left, I'll bring one home tonight."

He touched it again with his thumb, and she felt the passing of a shiver work up her body and settle in the back of her neck. The room went away during the time it took her to recover from the cold sensation, and when she could again, she noticed his eyes, pale and vacant. He seldom looked at her now. She felt as though her husband had abandoned his body somehow and left this empty approximation to hover over her. Now, since it had first shown itself on her breast and begun to grow, if he looked at her at all it was a furtive glance, the secret way one looks at a widow perhaps, to see what anguish is there.

Things had gotten to that. Meals together were difficult because they were thrust together. They kept magazines everywhere, so he picked them up and thumbed through them during his breakfasts and dinners. Now it was necessary to constantly have something to read.

"Emma, if you'd rather I not get the glass..."

"I don't know," she said, her voice dry as eggshell. She moved heavily from the bed and wrapped her robe about her, groping behind for the ties.

"Some of them just go away. Maybe it's one of those."

Leaving the bedroom, she said something so quietly even she did not hear what it was. She went to the kitchen and fried eggs, and they ate on their balcony under the cool October sunlight, and she read an article by a woman who had escaped the violence of El Salvador and said that revolutionaries were frightening because they were so romantic, so serious and dedicated. She warned young women that they could wake up one morning as she did and find ruin all around—the

ruin of dedication, the ruin of romanticism, but especially the ruin of uncontrolled sadism. Emma read the entire article and the italicized biography that followed, and by then her husband had finished his eggs and tea and was standing, talking to her, and she set the magazine aside, marking her place, saying that yes, she would, she would try to think of other things.

He passed up the five-thirty train, deciding only an instant before the train moved that he would stop by the pharmacy. It was a small shop, with a few rows of medicines, cosmetics, and soaps, hair brushes, magazines, and little else. It was the kind of dusty, half-



lit drug-store that seems always to be going out of business, its aisles filled with open cardboard boxes, its space filled with the ghosts of those who had suffered and searched for remedies.

In the back of the store, a man in a grey smock appeared suddenly behind a frosted glass counter wall. He looked like a misshapen dwarf. Gazing down, his glasses pushed up to the middle of his bald head, he was a face without eyes or mouth. When he spoke, it was soft, and from

deep within.

"How's the wife?"

"Okay," the husband said. "And yours?"

"What can I get you?" the druggist asked, his eyes and mouth now rolling up from his neck. He looked out, squinting through the heavy glass.

The husband pointed at the display of magnifying glasses on the counter between them.

Casually, the druggist said, "Of course." He reached over the glass wall



and felt for one in a box. Against the glass, his smock-covered body seemed to swim in milk. "Anything else we can get you?"

The husband shook his head no, put the correct change in the tray, and the druggist rang up the sale. He clipped the receipt to the white bag and handed it over the wall.

"How big is it?" asked the druggist, his eyes and mouth blurring as he spoke.

The husband hesitated, half turning away, but then he said, "Not big."

The druggist looked up quickly.

"How big?"

The husband turned away.

"The size of a quarter?"

"A little larger," said the husband, trying to leave.

"Can you see honeycomb yet?"

"No."

"No?" asked the druggist, but he did not wait for an answer, and became busy again down on his counter, his body rippling in foamy angles behind the glass. "When you see honeycomb ..."

"I know what to do," the husband said.

"Yes," said the druggist.

All Emma had read warned of a growing emotional attachment that would form for it. Still, she could not help being curious. Against her will,

to the mirror as though to kiss the image moving toward her. A gray light suffused the bathroom, only a dim glow coming from the window behind her. Outside, day was ending. Emma leaned toward the mirror until she felt its cold tap against her nipple. Then she rested her forehead against the glass and looked, and looked, in the dim light, at the silver image of the growth and at the honeycombs now visible. She saw the slight opening and closing movements they made, as slight



as the mouths of tiny fish at rest, hovering in a stream against stones. She loved it now. She felt alive.

Later, she was dressed and reading when he came in. Without looking up, as though completely engrossed, she managed to see the white package he was carrying. When he entered, it felt to her as though someone had come into the room with a gun. She forced the image away and tried to think of something else, tried to feel the musty pages of the magazine between her fingers. She had had a brandy before, and now she tasted the after-dryness and touched her tongue to the roof of her mouth, turned a page away that she had not read, adjusted the hem of

her skirt and, finally, as though someone had tilted her head back, she looked directly at him and at the package.

It seemed he approached her abruptly, and she stopped him by asking—something: her mind did not register what it was.

"I have the glass," he told her, ignoring whatever she had said.

"It's still very small," she said, almost whispering. "Can't we wait until there's something to see? It could be something else. It doesn't have to be what you think." The words rushed out, and she wanted to cup her hands over it and press it tight against her. She wanted to feel its slickness and its little shape against her palm.

Yet she followed him into their bedroom and waited while he unwrapped the magnifying glass. She unbuttoned her blouse for him without feeling.

He brought the glass down to it and tilted it upward so they both could see. And there it was, five-sided of course, the pink tips of the enlarged honeycombs throbbing, sucking at the air. Beneath a layer of transparent elastic tissue, a gray-lidded eye rolled, sealed in a socket like a steel bearing. Enlarged by the glass, it frightened him as it moved beneath the folds of the lid like an elbow poking beneath covers. He would have touched it but for the tiny reddish stinger that emerged from just above the eyelid as his finger drew near.

"Don't," she said, seeing his hand above it. "I don't want you to do any more." As she spoke, the stinger rose stiffly toward the magnifying glass, wavering back and forth, feeling the air. When the husband spoke it came out still farther, the curling tip nearly touching the glass.

"I'm sure," he told her. "There's no doubt. You can see it, too. The stem is ribbed the way they said it would be."

"No," she said, looking away.

"Emma, we've got to cut it off."

"No," she said again. "No."

"I'm going to cut it off. You're crazy, all this waiting. We've got to cut it off now."

She started to say no again, but instead she pressed herself against his arm.

It was sudden, so quick he didn't feel the tiny, rapid puncture. And there was no mark left on him. He remembered only that he loved her and wanted always to be close to her. "I love you," he said to her.

"Yes," she said, and buttoned her

For the third time today, she stared at the little pentaploid growth, admiring it the way a young girl might examine the fineness of her body.

several times a day, she opened her blouse, stood on tiptoes, and leaned against the bathroom medicine cabinet mirror, watching it as it appeared to grow ("fester," is what one doctor had said). Now for the third time today, she stared at the little pentaploid growth, admiring it the way a young girl might examine the fineness of her body, touching with her fingertips, timidly letting her finger move in circles where it grew. She touched it. She felt a fondness for it. She leaned

SUMMER

blouse as he watched. She was lovely, and he took her hand. They walked together into the living room, through the autumn light.

The stinger was as long as a rosebush thorn the morning its eye opened. Emma had only dozed on the steel surface of consciousness, and not until dawn did rigidity leave her body and allow her to sink downward into the mouth of sleep.

Her husband slept easily, at the upper surface, as he had done since the evening he'd received the unnoticed puncture. He had not dreamed once or slept soundly since that night when, as his mind drifted semiconscious and numb, a coldness seeped from the

wound in his chest and wrapped itself about both of them.

The morning its eye opened was by chance the last day of autumn. Crisp trees staggered in the cold winds. The children who had to pass under them were frightened of their claws, frightened of the tattered disoriented webs waving on the dried crusts of the branches. To those who had not looked out at them since October, it was a sudden and alarming sight.

Just after dawn the eye rose in its socket and rolled toward Emma's husband, saw him, and instantly the tip end of the stinger emerged from the lip-fold above the eye, touching the air. Then, as though satisfied there was no danger, the stinger withdrew into the folds and the eye settled back into the socket. It rolled slowly as it looked about the room. The bellowslike honeycombs could be seen easily now without a magnifying glass. It seemed in its way to be maturing, and the greyish stem that held it to Emma's breast was beginning to harden, to wither perhaps.

When they awoke that morning and all the mornings of winter that followed, they did not notice its development. They sensed it, however, and Emma had quietly withdrawn from any contact with others. She preferred to stay at home and keep warm. It was uncomfortable outside now in the deep snow that seemed to cover the universe. And her husband, who was a timid man by nature, did not mention the growth to her, or look at it. Since he was a man who loved the idea of travel, he came home nights and studied his maps.

Early in spring, the stem completely rotted; it dropped away from her breast while they slept. It went into the folds of their bedding where it moved about their legs. She dreamed about a mix of people talking, and red blankets in the sky, and she was flying, twisting over the fields, moving out toward the wrinkled sea—no wind, no horses in the grass—spinning, spinning wildly toward the sea.

Later they were forced to notice it, when during the course of a day they found it off somewhere in the house with the fragile remains of a sparrow. Or scampering away when they approached, it might leave behind a partially devoured something—something unrecognizable now, something dry of its juices; a thing now paper-light, shell-like and translucent.

Now it was stronger; it came back to them not out of need but out of instinct. It was part of them, and it felt a drugged comfort as it came into their home. When it stayed away, for whatever reason, searching perhaps, or merely existing between the layers and currents of air, it sometimes experienced an abysmal loneliness. But it was then that it worked most efficiently, searching with its eye, its stinger perched and throbbing, set in the folds and ready. It came down from the trees upon children; it hovered for days until it was time, then struck. It lingered with armies. It found what it needed in hospitals and jails.

Yet, in time it always returned to Emma and her husband, to that euphoria it found only when it was near them. It came back constantly throughout the late spring of that year to linger, crowding into a bent knee, slipping over a thigh. It had become strong, it loved their flesh, it slept against them both, feeling them sigh in their sleep. It was of them.

Outside summer was rising, and it felt the exhilaration of freedom in the air.



(continued from page 57)

I'd prefer to reject fantasies like that.

TZ: How widespread is this type of horror?

KLEIN: So widespread that for a lot of people what symbolizes horror are those famous binoculars with spikes in the movie *Horrors of the Black Museum*. Now, I was as shocked by that scene as anyone else, but I would like to think that there are more things at work than that in a good horror movie. Unfortunately, a good many readers and writers seem to stop at those spikes.

TZ: Are there any writers you would recommend for those interested in trying to create a more restrained, sophisticated kind of story, the kind of story, for example, that you write?

KLEIN: I always like to recommend Arthur Machen, the Welsh writer whose style I admire, even though his stories are somewhat uneven. But I would really urge anyone interested in writing good horror to read far more outside the genre than I expect they do. A good, well-made mainstream story may be a far better model stylistically than most horror stories. My personal taste runs to stories with just a touch of the supernatural—stories that could almost pass for mainstream fiction.

TZ: So if a story is written well and has good atmosphere, a writer doesn't have to worry too much about the scare—the scare will take care of itself.

KLEIN: I like to think so; the scare will certainly gain its power from good writing, a good grounding in reality, well-drawn characters, and a convincing locale. Too many people seem to confuse a recounted anecdote with fiction. They place undue importance on plot.

TZ: Is that why so many classic horror pieces have a tale within a tale—to get the anecdotal story out of the way?

KLEIN: Maybe. At any rate, it creates a sense of comfort and security, a sense of pleasure right before you launch yourself into the menacing world of the supernatural.

TZ: Speaking of menacing worlds, what is it that appeals to you about New York as a setting?

KLEIN: I'm beginning to think New York may almost be too easy a setting. Among other things, New York provides the chance for encounters with people from alien backgrounds or outright lunatics, and, of course, it provides lots of dark shadows and hiding places. But New York's real horrors sometimes conflict with supernatural ones. There are people who will say naively, "How can you read horror stories when all you have to do is pick up a daily newspaper. Don't you see enough horror there?" And, of course, these people don't know what horror is all about. In fact, you read and write in the genre to escape the horrors of the daily newspaper. To ask that kind of question is like asking someone living in a high crime area how he can read Sherlock Holmes.

TZ: So what's the point of horror, then?

KLEIN: Ideally, horror creates a sense of awe, a sense of something greater than man.

TZ: Many of the classic writers like Blackwood find that awe in nature, and The Ceremonies is certainly full of pastoral scenes. Other than going to the wilds of New Jersey—if you can call New Jersey a state of nature—where do you get the ideas of your nature scenes?

KLEIN: For me, New Jersey truly was a state of nature. For me, almost anything outside of New York seems like the country. When I was growing up on Long Island, I used to snort with disgust at my relatives from New York City coming out to "the country," when I knew it was just the suburbs. But now I have to admit that I perceive it that way. While I do have a great love for New England, especially Vermont, I don't really need such places to begin imagining. Really, put me between two trees on a three-foot piece of grass, and I'll start imagining nature all around.

TZ: But I know you do most of your work right here in this apartment. Could you describe your work habits?

KLEIN: I'm very undisciplined. I don't have any work routine, and I wish I did. I sometimes recall with great empathy a line from Fran Lebowitz: she says she can't write, she's afraid to write, and she writes only when the fear of not writing becomes greater

than the fear of writing. When I finally get to writing, I do it in spurts: I write first drafts very quickly, then take ages to revise. Thank God for the invention of the word processor, because I'm the type who goes over sentences dozens of times—not necessarily to the improvement of the story, but at least to my own satisfaction.

TZ: How did being the editor of *The Twilight Zone* fit in with your writing?

KLEIN: Sometimes it frightened me when I thought of the enormous mass of talented people out there. Yet sometimes, if I'd been reading a lot of poorly written stories, it made me forget how to write: I actually forgot the trick of how a sentence is constructed.

TZ: On the other hand, is it beneficial to read good stuff before writing?

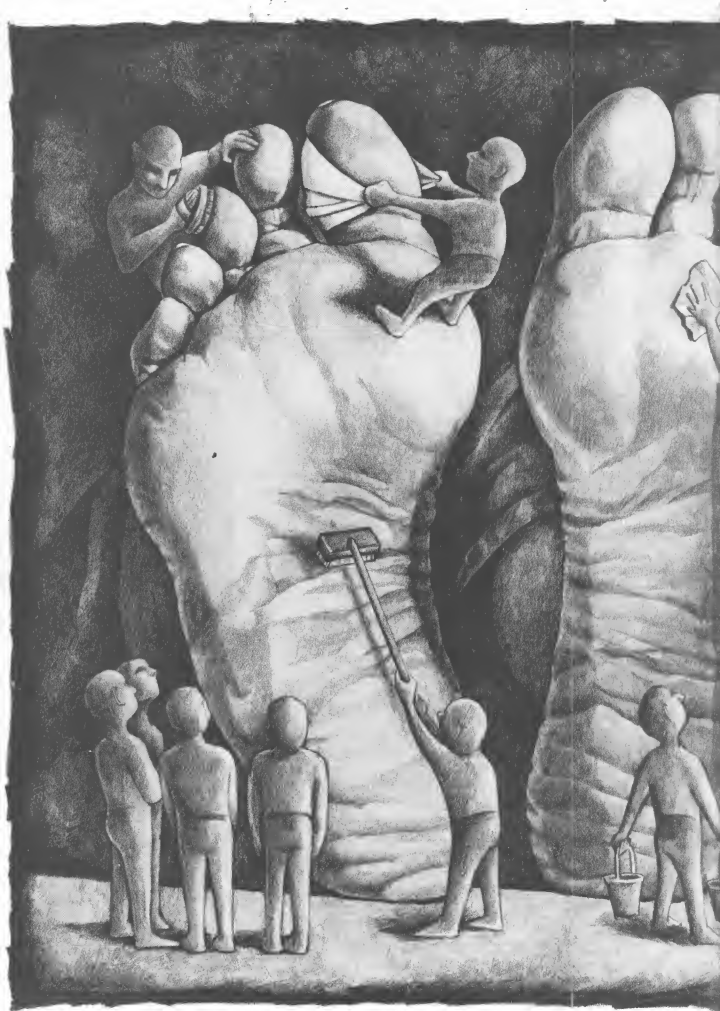
KLEIN: There are plenty of writers who'll say you shouldn't read anybody else before you write, but for me it's absolutely necessary. I need to be inspired.

TZ: What about Lovecraft? I know he was one of your first enthusiasms and inspirations—and yet the clarity of Dark Gods, your recent collection of stories, isn't at all Lovecraftian. Do you still respond to Lovecraft the way you did when you were younger?

KLEIN: I have to admit that I'm more interested in his life these days than in his fiction. Given the chance, I'd much rather read a collection of his letters than his short stories. I'm writing an introduction to a new Arkham House edition of his shorter fiction, and, although I'm still impressed at times by his writing, I think the day is past when I react with a shiver.

TZ: I remember that "The Colour Out of Space" was one of my favorite stories when I was a teenager, but now I can't get past the opening description. Maybe Lovecraft has a special appeal to us in our adolescence.

KLEIN: I suppose so. Certainly I've had the experience in more recent years of recommending a story or two to different friends and having them not terribly moved by it. But the man's life and character remain quite fascinating to me—his quirks, his eccentricities, his obsessions, his fears, his incredible talents, and his generosity to beginners in the field. ■





Piggies

*Harlan had the cleanest feet in town.
Then, suddenly, he had the most
productive feet in town.*

H by ANITA KRANITZ SCHLANK

Harlan Pemberton checked his feet every morning. Every morning. Coach Hughes had told all his men to do that when Harlan was on the basketball team in high school, and Harlan had never missed a day in twenty-five years. It was important, Coach had said to keep your feet clean, especially between your toes, clean and dry. Otherwise you could get athlete's foot, and if one man got it, pretty soon the whole team would get it, and how could they go on to win the state championship if all the men on the court were constantly trying to scratch between their toes? How could you jump and land two dozen times during a game if you were afraid your feet might crack open when they hit the court? And even worse, you could never take off your shoes in the presence of a girl, even at the beach, for fear she might be disgusted. She might even tell the other girls you'd want to ask out that your feet smelled like moldy cheese!

Well, Harlan, old Hoverin' Harl as he'd been called when he'd played ball, he'd always checked his feet. And cleaned them at least twice daily, not just with a splash of water like most of the guys had done, but with soap and hot water. And he'd powdered them afterward. He usually liked to use a medicated foot powder, guaranteed to control athlete's foot fungus, but in a pinch he'd settle for baby powder or even that perfumey bath stuff. When he'd married Louise, he'd been a little afraid she would think he was overdoing it, washing his feet all the time, changing his shoes and socks two or three times a day, but she thought it was cute. She'd even help him when they were first married, washing and drying each toe separately, covering each one with kisses and powder, calling them her "little piggies."

Yes, well, that was then. Now Louise was just glad his feet didn't smell like some guys' did. Harlan didn't remember the last time she'd kissed any of his piggies, but then, at forty-three, he didn't guess he was entitled to that kind of fooling around anymore. Like his basketball career, it had had its own season, and then faded.

Sunday morning Harlan slept a little later. His small real estate office was closed. In a town the size of Burt's Crossing, there weren't many people looking to buy on Sunday, and besides, Harlan already handled every house on the market. He had no appointments this day, and no open houses to attend either. Business wasn't great, but Harlan believed that when life handed you a lemon, you made lemonade, and he did the best he could. His other job, as town postmaster, was what brought in enough money for Harlan and Louise to live on in a fairly comfortable,

Piggles

childless manner, but the post office (connected to his real estate cottage) was closed on Sunday, too.

He rolled over in the double bed, hoping to catch a few more moments of sleep. Louise was not in the bed; she was an early riser and by nine o'clock had probably already finished most of a pot of coffee and the Sunday paper. Harlan stretched, pushed off the covers, and mentally smelling Louise's coffee, decided to get up.

He padded barefoot to the bathroom and took care of his morning ablutions. He put a towel on the bathroom floor in front of the sink, removed his pajamas, and raised his right leg, putting his foot in the sink. As he soaped and rinsed it, he thought he felt a slight tingling between his toes. He quickly washed the other foot, felt the same tingles, and ran back to the bedroom for his magnifying glass. Sitting on his bed, he aimed the high intensity reading lamp toward his foot. Yep, under the magnifying lens he definitely could see something. Small red dots. He rubbed one and picked at another. Didn't itch. Felt kind of numb. He returned to the bathroom and ran water over the foot he'd examined. Same tingle.

Well, Coach was right again. You couldn't be too vigilant, Harlan thought as he pulled out the tube of athlete's foot ointment he'd been saving for twenty-five years. Well, not the same tube. He'd replaced it every four or five years, when the expiration date had passed. He rubbed his feet

thoroughly with the ointment, and just to be on the safe side, put some medicated powder in his socks. No need to tell Louise, he decided. She might worry. Or worse, be revolted. In any case, a man was entitled to his secrets, and Harlan had kept precious few during his marriage. He's clear this up and then tell Louise.

By Monday afternoon, Harlan was applying the ointment to his feet every half hour or so. He still hadn't told Louise, and the red dots between his toes seemed to be getting bigger. No pain yet, and no itch, but his toes felt uncomfortably crowded in his shoes, as if he'd grown an extra one or something.

He called Louise just before dinner to tell her he'd be home a little late. He needed to check the basement in the old Carter house after the post office closed. The old stone cottage was going back on the market that weekend, and the out-of-town relatives who wanted to sell it had asked Harlan to see if there was water in the cellar before they opened it to the public. Harlan also needed to stop at a drugstore and pick up another tube of ointment, but he didn't tell Louise that. He still hoped the dots would go away on their own.

The Carter house was about seventy years old, Harlan mused, filling in the repair check-sheet he'd brought along from his office. As he made his way down the cellar stairs, an overpowering smell hit him. Not foul, as he'd expected, but damp and dank and earthy. Harlan was relieved. At least that meant the sewer hadn't backed up. He shone his flashlight in the four corners of the small room, listening carefully. No water. Just a regular damp basement. No rats or mice scurrying around down there. With a sigh of relief, he retraced his steps to the door at the top of the stairs. It wouldn't open on the first try, and Harlan put his shoulder to it. It still wouldn't budge. He pushed and pulled and kicked at it, but finally gave up. Obviously, he was stuck. Good thing Louise knew where he was. With a sigh, he sat down on the bottom step, his back up against the cellar wall, and waited to be rescued.

Sometime during the night, Harlan must have kicked off his shoes because when he woke up he was in his stocking feet. His mouth was dry and fuzzy, and he had a pain in his shoulder from leaning on the damp

wall all night. He realized that last night was the first time since high school that he hadn't washed his feet before he slept, and he resolved to do an extra careful job later that day when Louise got him out of there. Where was she, anyway? Harlan looked at his watch. Six-thirty in the morn-

Locked in the privacy of his own bathroom, Harlan once again examined the strange protuberances on his feet.

ing. He'd been in the cellar for twelve hours. Where was Louise? Just then he heard a scraping noise above him and footsteps. He heard a grunt and a few choice words as he yelled for help, and then the door swung open.

"Harlan, are you in there?" Louise sounded angry.

"I'm here. What took you so long?"

Louise came tramping down the stairs. The basement was flooded with the light from the kitchen above.

"I got to thinking you'd met someone and gone off for a drink, or a game of chess," Louise said. "You have done that, you know."

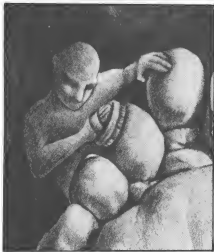
He knew.

"Well, about midnight, I was mad and decided to go to bed. When I woke up at four a.m. and you weren't home, I figured you'd gotten into some trouble, so I came here first."

Harlan put on an expression he hoped was appropriately contrite.

"Well," Louise said, "what are you waiting for? Put on your shoes and let's go home. You could use a shower."

Harlan agreed. "And some dinner." He bent down to put on his shoes. He shook his head, looking at



his socks. "There's something on my socks."

Louise looked. "Something in them, it looks like."

Harlan looked again. His socks were all lumpy near the toes. He pulled them off. "Oh, my God."

Louise looked too, openmouthed. "Harlan," she said. "You've got mushrooms growing between your toes!"

At home, locked in the privacy of his own bathroom, with Louise, under protest, minding the post office, Harlan Pemberton once again examined the strange protuberances on his feet. They certainly looked like mushrooms of some sort, he thought, although not the kind that came wrapped in cellophane covered boxes and sold for \$1.09 for twelve ounces in the supermarket. No, these were more of a cream color and lumpy, and looked like just the caps of mushrooms, with no stem. Harlan scraped at one with his fingernail, and brought it to his nose. It had a penetrating, slightly garlic-smelling odor. He scraped at it again, afraid to dislodge the whole thing until he saw a doctor. The taste was elusively familiar, but not recognizable immediately. Harlan started to peel the edges back from one of the lumps where it seemed to be attached to his foot, but then stopped. There was no pain, but what would he find under there? A root or stem perhaps? And how far into his foot had it penetrated? He shuddered at the thought of a foreign root system intertwined with his own.

No, best to let the doctor check it out. Just as soon as Louise closed up the post office, he'd have her drive him over to the next county, to the hospital there, and see a specialist. It wouldn't do to have old Doc Logan see this; no, he'd let it slip that Harlan Pemberton had mushrooms growing between his toes and that would shoot his real estate cottage business to hell. Who'd want to buy a piece of property on the say-so of a man who couldn't even keep his own feet clean?

The doctors at Claridge Cove General examined Harlan's feet. At least twenty or thirty white-coated physicians and nurses came in to peer at them, take scrapings and samples and blood and saliva, and finally, a surgeon introduced himself. With Mr. Pemberton's permission, he said, he would remove the lumps for further analysis. Harlan agreed, signed some papers and after a quick examination

to make sure he wasn't growing these things elsewhere, was put to sleep. When he awoke, Louise was standing over his bandaged feet.

"Was it ... malignant?" he croaked, his voice hoarse from the anesthesia.

"Truffles," Louise said.

"What?" He couldn't have heard right.

"Truffles," she repeated. "Truffles. Expensive mushrooms. You have truffles growing between your toes, Harlan. The surgeon suspected it and the analysis proved it." Louise sat down heavily on the chair at the foot of the bed.

"Did they get it all?"

"All they could," she said, looking bewildered. "We can go home tomorrow. They don't know what else to do here. The surgeon suggested that we fly to New York City and see a blood doctor there to find out why this happened."

"Do I have stitches? Do they have to be removed?" Harlan asked groggily.

"No stitches. He just whacked them off the base, where they grow out of your feet. Harlan, you don't understand. Listen, Harlan, the roots are still in there."

Next morning Harlan signed his release papers and Louise drove him home. His feet were still bandaged but not painful at all. As they had agreed, Louise stopped at the library on the way home and took out a book on fungi. At home, Harlan sat in his recliner, feet up, and listened as Louise read aloud to him.

"Truffles are the only mushrooms that produce their fruiting bodies underground," she said. "They usually have a symbiotic relationship with trees, such as hazelnut, beech, poplar and willow."

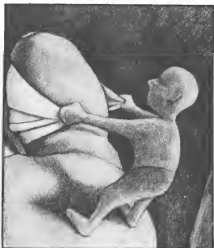
"We have poplar and willow in the backyard," Harlan said thoughtfully. "But I've never noticed any truffles."

"The American variety is considered inedible," Louise informed him. "The white kind that you have is only found in Italy, in Piedmont and in the Parma, Modena, and Bologna areas, and is universally considered the best among truffles."

Harlan felt flattered. "How nice. Although I've never been in Italy, I've always felt an affinity for the Italians."

"The best one is called the Alber truffle, or *tuber magnatum*, because it is considered worthy of the maginate, or very rich. They sell here for between twenty or thirty dollars an ounce."

"How appropriate," Harlan mur-



mured to himself, at least feeling his true worth recognized.

"Truffles should never be washed or peeled," Louise continued, "but if it is necessary to clean them, it should be done in dry white wine."

"We have a few bottles in the cellar," Harlan said. "Check on them later, will you dear?"

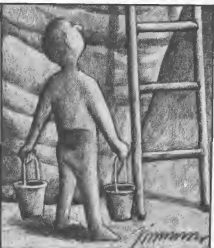
"To preserve them for a few months, they should be covered in white wine and put into hermetically sealed glass jars and boiled for two hours," Louise looked up as Harlan cleared his throat.

"I want you to run to the market, dear," he said. "Pick up some canning jars, the half-pint size, and some lids and rings. And a few more bottles of white wine. And some cheese for a fondue. Tonight we are going to dine, and tomorrow we begin a new business."

Louise looked away, swallowing a few times. "Harlan, the doctor removed those ... truffles ... from your feet. They're gone."

"No, my dear," he said. "Look."

He removed the bed-socks he had been wearing to cover his bandages.



PIGGIES

Then he removed the bandages. "Voilà!" The lumps were back.

"My God," Louise breathed. "They're springing up like ..."

"Like mushrooms," Harlan said with obvious satisfaction. "Like mushrooms."

Within six weeks Harlan and Louise had a store of two hundred four-ounce jars of white truffles covered in white wine. They placed covered in white wine. They placed advertisements in all the gourmet food magazines and several of the better restaurateur journals, calling their product "Magnate Truffles, Inc." They purchased a used postage meter and began to fill the orders that were coming in at an average of ten to twenty per day.

Harlan had refused to go into New York City's finest hospital, and after a few weeks of phone calls from the surgeon who had operated on him, and other medical researchers, the Pembertons had an answering machine installed with the message that they had moved away with no forwarding address. Harlan gave his real estate cottage over to one of the townsmen and took a leave of absence from the post office due to "ill health." As far as the citizens of Burt's Crossing were concerned, he and Louise were semi-retired while he recovered. It was a good excuse, and it gave Harlan a reason to sit under a blanket all day with his feet wrapped in damp towels, simulating the best growing conditions for truffles.

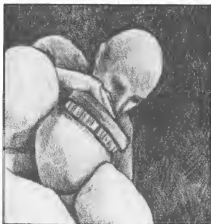
"Another few months," he told Louise, as they endorsed the checks that came with the orders, "and we'll be rolling in clover."

Louise looked slightly worried, but her Yankee practicality took over, and she nodded.

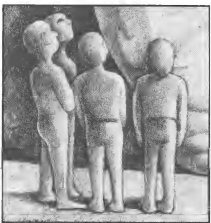
"Have you seen the latest issue of *Food and Drink* magazine?" she asked.

"No. Did they get our ad wrong?"

"Our ad is okay," Louise said. "It's just that I noticed another truffle ad, too." She showed Harlan the magazine page. There was another advertisement for truffles, but it was for the less exclusive black kind. "There's room in the market for one more,"



When Louise brought home a plastic box of white truffles from the local supermarket, Harlan knew the gravy train had ended.



Harlan shrugged.

That afternoon's mail brought three more orders and two more magazines.

"There's a whole bunch more truffle ads, Harlan," Louise said.

"You don't think this is something to worry about?" Louise asked Harlan the next morning, as the restaurateurs' brochures came in. There were four ads for truffles, each at a cost less than the Pembertons'. Harlan looked worried, then pensive.

"We'll put the house on the market and move to Seattle," he said. "It's always damp there. I'll bet we could double the output in a year, and lower our prices significantly."

"Maybe," Louise looked doubtful. "But if they continue to be so accessible, we'll have to drop our price this year to stay competitive."

"Maybe it won't last," Harlan said. "Could you get me another towel please? This one's almost dry."

When Louise brought home a cellophane wrapped plastic box of white truffles from the local supermarket, Harlan knew the gravy train had ended. He called the New York hospital to make an appointment with the research doctor to have his truffles permanently removed.

"I'm sorry, sir," the receptionist on the phone told him, "but Dr. Sargeant is all booked up for truffle analysis and removal, at least until next December. I could call you if we have a cancellation."

Four months passed. But Harlan put his name down anyway, and sat down at his typewriter. In six days, he completed his autobiography and sent it off to a publisher. It came back by return mail with a form letter saying, "We are presently overstocked with material on this topic." He sent it out again, this time to a supermarket tabloid, and received an acceptance and a check for two thousand dollars. For about three days after the article came out, he was a celebrity with his face and feet appearing at every check-out stand in the land, but eventually that died down, too.

Harlan returned to his job as postmaster for Burt's Crossing, and Louise began teaching piano lessons to supplement their income. But they continued to can and store the truffles that they harvested, hoping that someday the surplus would end, and once again their lives would get back to normal.



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He's Alive

Part II of II

(Part I appeared in our August issue.)

by **ROD SERLING**

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The original television script first aired on CBS-TV January 24, 1963.

CAST

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| Peter Vollmer | Dennis Hopper |
| Ernst Ganz | Ludwig Donath |
| Adolf Hitler | Curt Conway |
| Frank | Paul Mazursky |
| Nick | Howard Caine |
| Stanley | Barnaby Hale |
| Heckler | Bernard Fein |
| Gibbons | Jay Adler |
| Proprietor | Wolf Brazell |

ACT THREE

FADE ON:

129. INTERIOR MEETING HALL NIGHT

The room is mobbed with people, full of stamping feet, whistles, cat-calls, applause. A slow pan past the faces of dedicated idiots until we're shooting up toward the platform. There, draped in bunting—American flag on one side, the organization's flag on the other—is a portrait of Nick. An exhalted hog who looks out from the same piggish eyes on the mob. Whip pan over to:

130. THE DOUBLE DOORS

As more people come through them and then are left open.

CUT TO:

131. EXTERIOR CORRIDOR NIGHT

Frank and Stanley wait there expectantly, then look up as the door to the alley opens. Vollmer enters and walks toward them. He turns toward Frank.

VOLLMER
(tersely)

Good crowd?

FRANK

Right to the ceiling.

Vollmer nods contentedly then looks toward Stanley.

132. CLOSE SHOT STANLEY

He turns away.

VOLLMER

What eats, Stan?

STANLEY

Nothin', Pete.

VOLLMER

Then why the look?

STANLEY

(forcing a smile)

Nothin', Pete. Nothin' at all.

Vollmer reaches over to touch his lapel and very gently turns him toward him.

VOLLMER

Go ahead and talk, Stan.

At this point Stanley turns, looks through the open double doors where part of the platform is visible, and the portrait of Nick. He turns back toward Vollmer.

STANLEY

He was a nice guy, Pete. He was my friend. I miss him.

133. CLOSE SHOT

His eyes seem to burn.

VOLLMER

Shall I tell you what he really was, Stanley? I'll give it a run down for you. He was a fat pig with no guts.

134. MOVING SHOT WITH THE THREE MEN

As they walk through the double doors. The camera stays with them and we're listening to Vollmer's monologue as they walk.

VOLLMER

He was a greasy big mouth who

copped out every time he took a breath.

135. SHOT OF THE CORNER OF THE PLATFORM

As they arrive and Vollmer whirls around to face Stanley, jerking his thumb up in the direction of the picture.

VOLLMER

He was a nickel and dime Judas who got just what he deserved. So don't mourn for Nick, Stanley. He doesn't rate mourning. *Not that pig.*

CUT TO:

136. ANOTHER ANGLE OF THE PLATFORM

As the crowd starts to applaud and cheer, seeing Vollmer ascend the podium. He holds up his hands for quiet. The cheering and applause die out and the room lapses into complete stillness. Vollmer dramatically looks over the sea of faces then turns and looks at Nick's giant portrait behind him. He looks at it for a long theatrical moment then wipes away what appears to be a tear in his eye, points to the picture, faces the audience.

VOLLMER

A man of honor died last week. A decent, courageous fighter for the cause of freedom gave his life.

(then shrieking)

He gave his life for us! Some skulking assassin murdered him! But, my friends, neighbors, co-fighters—Nick Bloss did not die in vain. They stilled his great heart ... but they could not stifle his memory. They could not obliterate his courage. They could not wipe away his honor.

(then, screaming again)

He lives, my friends! He lives in you and in He lives deep in the gut of any human being who believes that the United States of America should be free. Should be untainted. Should be saved from the mongrels who try to enslave it!

(he points to the picture again)

Nick Bloss died for this! And you and I ... we will live for it!

137. ANGLE SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER

As the crowd screams its approval.

DISSOLVE TO:

138-141. SERIES OF MONTAGE SHOTS

Of Vollmer speaking, superimposed over shot of people listening, watching, feeling, believing. The louder his frenzied voice and gestures, the louder their response.

142-145. SERIES OF SHOTS OF NEWSPAPER PICTURES,

MAGAZINE COVERS, ET CETERA

All featuring Vollmer's face in a clenched fist pose.

DISSOLVE TO:

146. EXTERIOR STREET LONG SHOT OVER THE HEADS OF A CROWD AT PETER VOLLMER NIGHT

Standing on a platform illuminated by the light of two torches held by a couple of cronies. His body, face, hands, are contorted—his eyes burning and fierce, but there is no sound whatsoever. The whole thing is in pantomime. The camera starts to pull back until we're in the:

147. INTERIOR BAR NIGHT

Looking through the plate glass window at the scene outside. The pull back continues until we see Ganz just sitting down at the bar. A customer comes in and leaves the door open, at which point we begin to hear Vollmer's voice as it slides up and down—first explosively powerful, then dripping with sarcasm, then boyishly humorous—and to each mood the crowd reacts in kind. First "oh's" and "ah's," then shouted affirmation, then laughter. When the door closes, the sound cuts off.

148. CLOSE TWO SHOT GANZ AND THE BARTENDER

BARTENDER

How are you tonight, Mr. Ganz?

GANZ

(a wan smile)

I'm very sober.

BARTENDER

Beer?

GANZ

If you please.

The bartender draws a mug and hands it to Ganz. At this moment Peter Vollmer's voice hits a shrieking crescendo and there is a burst of applause from the crowd.

BARTENDER

Got a voice on him.

GANZ

(looking toward the window, nods—then, softly)

And I knew it ... when it was a whimper.

BARTENDER

That's a wild kid, that one. Used to be ... used to be people would laugh at him—but lately—

(he shakes his head back and forth, his face grim)

Lately he gets the crowd. And not many people laugh either.

(he turns to look at Ganz)

You've known him a long time, haven't you?

GANZ

Since he was a child. A silent little

boy with very little to say.

149. MOVING SHOT GANZ

As he steps away from the bar and carries the beer mug over to the window.

150. SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER

Of the tableau in front of him—the sweating, gesturing figure of Vollmer, his face distorted by the torch light—a mesmerized crowd of faces that watch him.

151. CLOSE PROFILE SHOT GANZ

GANZ

I've been here before.

(he closes his eyes and leans his head against the window pane—his voice is almost a whisper)

Oh, yes—I've been here before.

152. ANGLE SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER THE BARTENDER

Who is studying him from behind the bar.

BARTENDER

(shaking his head)

That was another time, Mr. Ganz.

Another place. Another kind of people.

(he shakes his head again)

That doesn't go here.

153. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD GANZ BARTENDER'S POINT OF VIEW

GANZ

(very softly)

That's what we said, too. That was the dialogue. They were "brown scum." But not worthy of comment. Temporary insanity and part of the passing scene. Too monstrous to be real. And too monstrous to be believed. So we ignored them. Or laughed at them. Or made fun of them. Because we couldn't believe that there were enough insane people to walk alongside of them and go where they were going.

(a pause)

And then one morning ... one morning the country woke up from an uneasy sleep ... and there was no more laughter left. The Peter Vollmer had taken over. The animals had changed places with us in the cage. He walks very slowly over to the door. He puts his hand on the knob and almost compulsively yanks the door open to let a wave of sound come in. The roar of the crowd. And then, over it, Vollmer's own strident voice.

154. SHOT THROUGH THE DOOR FROM OUTSIDE OF GANZ

Standing there. He can listen only for a

few moments, then closes the door.

155. CLOSE SHOT GANZ

His face looks carved out of rock.

GANZ

But not again. It can't happen again.

(he turns toward the bartender)

We can't let it. We simply can't let it.

Not all that ... all that anguish. All

that horror. All that nightmare.

(he shakes his head)

Not this time!

CUT TO:

156. EXTERIOR BAR

As Ganz walks out. He pushes his way through a crowd of people until in some incredible way he finds himself standing alone staring up at Vollmer who is in the middle of a sentence and suddenly looks down to become aware of him.

157. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP AT VOLLMER

The appearance of Ganz has stunned him, cut off his train of thought, and left him silent. And for a long silent moment the two men stare at one another.

GANZ

(his voice is not loud, but in this stillness it carries)

Go on, Mr. Vollmer. You were saying? Vollmer's mouth works, but no words come.

158. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING DOWN AT GANZ

GANZ

I can tell them what you were saying. I've heard it before. I've heard it a thousand times before.

There is a murmur from the crowd.

CUT TO:

159. SHOT OF FRANK AND STANLEY

Who look up at Vollmer questioning for instructions.

160. CLOSE SHOT

Who simply stares and makes no move.

161. CLOSE SHOT STANLEY AND FRANK FAVORING FRANK

Who makes a gesture like a resigned shrug.

162. CLOSE SHOT GANZ

GANZ

Oh, yes, indeed—I've heard it before.

In Munich. In Berlin. On a hundred

different street corners. It was drivel

then ... it is drivel now!

163. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

VOLLMER

Ernst ... you've got to stop—

There is another murmur from the crowd

as Ganz turns to them so now he's speaking to all of them.

GANZ

And what's this one here—the new model? A nineteen sixty-three Fuehrer right off the assembly line?

(he shakes his head back and

forth, pityingly)

This one isn't so new. This one isn't so fresh. This one is just a cheap copy.

164. CLOSE SHOT FRANK

Who once again looks from one to the other, waiting for Vollmer's thunderous response and appalled at the silence.

165. ANOTHER ANGLE GANZ

He points to Vollmer.

GANZ

Let me tell you about this one. Let me tell you about the breed ... the species. *They're alike*. They're all alike. Problem children with delusions. Sick, sad neurotics who take applause like a needle.

166. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

His face white, drawn. His lips tremble. He takes a step off the platform toward Ganz.

VOLLMER

No more, Ernst—no more!

Ganz whirls around to face him. His voice is now low and directed only to the boy.

GANZ

Listen to my speech, Peter, and let them listen—or I'll tell them all about a quaking, whimpering child who cried on my couch ... who *still* cries on my couch.

167. CLOSER ANGLE VOLLMER

Who instinctively shakes his head and makes a pleading gesture. Ganz whirls around again to face the audience.

GANZ

They need parades and torch lights and slogans like therapy. They need uniforms and arm bands and shoulder straps—because without them they're naked objects ... pitiful and, and stripped!

(he points to Vollmer)

This one as well. This one who grew too old to bite his nails so he decided to make believe that he could lead other men!

168. CLOSER ANGLE VOLLMER

Who stops in his tracks, his white face whipped. His voice suddenly comes out—hoarse, strained.

VOLLMER

Ernst, please. Please don't. Ernst—

169. FLASH CLOSE SHOT FRANK

Who suddenly shouts.

FRANK

(shouting)

Pete—don't let him do this! Put him down, Pete! Put him down!

170. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AT GANZ

Who walks directly over to Vollmer, a hand's length away.

GANZ

Put me down, Peter. Shut me up. Still me. Why don't you? Why can't you?

A pause as he suddenly rips the band off Vollmer's sleeve and holds it dangling out in his fist.

GANZ

Because this is your courage right here. This is your strength. This and the torch lights and the crowd. The slogans and the *seig heils*. And if I tell you to your face, Peter Vollmer ... if I tell you to your face that your courage is made out of cloth. That your ideas are filthy garbage. And you're something less than a man ... what do you say to me? How do you answer me?

171. PAN SHOT ACROSS THE FACES OF THE CROWD

Who stare silently at this. The pan ends on a:

172. SHOT OF FRANK AND STANLEY

Who look on with gut-ache at what they're seeing.

173. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

Who suddenly backhands Ganz across the face—a stinging, cutting blow that brings blood.

CUT TO:

174. SHOT OF THE CROWD

Who gasp

CUT TO:

175. SHOT OF FRANK

Who tries to smile but something in the scene prevents it.

176. ANGLE SHOT GANZ

Who looks down toward the ground then slowly up. He reaches up and touches the blood on his mouth, looks at it on his fingertips.

GANZ

The rebuttal. The only kind of answer your kind knows how to give.

(he turns to face the crowd)

This is your Fuehrer? He's yours. I give him to you. A gift. A cheap gift. There are no collector's items in sewers!

177. HIGH ANGLE SHOT

LOOKING DOWN

As Ganz turns and walks slowly through the crowd and disappears into the night.

178. ANOTHER ANGLE THE CROWD

As they start to back away. Something has happened to them. Something indefinable. They've watched an emasculation and can no longer stomach it. Now they must find fresh air.

179. ANOTHER HIGH ANGLE LOOKING DOWN ON VOLLMER

As he turns and looks at the crowd as they depart. He makes an abortive motion toward them as if dredging up another speech, then lets his hand fall to his side. His last look is toward Frank and Stanley. Frank takes a step toward him.

FRANK

(his voice is strained)

Hey, Pete—

Vollmer looks at him.

FRANK

One old man. One crummy old man. I mean ... I mean ... why—?

180. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

Who looks down at the ground. His eyes close.

VOLLMER

(very softly)

Because ... because for just a ... for just an instant ... I'm the boy ... not the man.

He shakes his head, turns away—obviously cutting off any further comment. Behind him we see Frank and Stanley depart.

181. MOVING SHOT VOLLMER

As he walks back toward the platform and stands underneath the torch light—his face distorted by the flame. He very slowly turns.

182. ANGLE SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER

Of the darkness beyond the periphery of light, where once again the shadowy figure appears.

183. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD VOLLMER

From the darkness.

VOLLMER

You see ... you see ... the way it is ... I ... I knew him. I knew the old man.

MAN

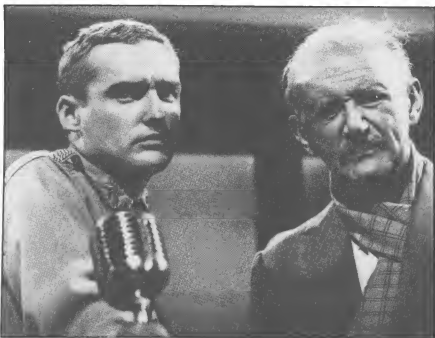
(very softly)

Is that a fact, Mr. Vollmer?

VOLLMER

(his voice hesitant—unsure)

Yeah ... yeah ... I've known him for a long time. I've known him for such



a long time.

MAN

(interrupting him, his voice loud)
Mr. Vollmer. I have no interest in who he is. My concern is in what he is. He cheapened you, Mr. Vollmer. He tore you to pieces. Your voice is like a lion ... your instincts are a rabbit's.

184. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

As he peers out into the darkness again.

VOLLMER

And you? What are you? You stand in the darkness and you direct traffic. You plan all the battles—but you're never there when they get fought. Why don't you come out into the light? Why don't you move up alongside?

(then, his voice rising)

Why don't you give me a name and a face and a reason why?

185. SHOT OVER VOLLMER'S SHOULDER OF THE SHADOWY FIGURE

Who takes a step forward, still not reaching the light.

MAN

Mr. Vollmer, I was making speeches before you knew how to read them. I was fighting battles when your only struggle was to get out of a womb.

(he takes another step closer to the light)

I was taking over a world when your universe was a crib.

186. ANOTHER ANGLE THE SHADOWY FIGURE

On the fringe of light, and now the voice suddenly sounds guttural, loud, piercing.

MAN

And as for my being in darkness, Mr. Vollmer, I invented darkness.

187. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

Who stares. His eyes gape.

188. CLOSE SHOT THE GROUND

Featuring the shadow of the man, then a slow pan up until we see him standing now—for the first time—in the light. The face is lined and old. The hair is oyster white. But the man is Adolf Hitler, and there can be no question of this.

189. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP AT VOLLMER

Who stares at him, open mouthed.

190. MOVING SHOT HITLER

Who walks toward the torch lights, walks up to the platform and stands there.

191. ANOTHER ANGLE OF VOLLMER

As he starts to back away—first slow and shuffling then a trot, then a dead run. Over his shoulder the figure of Hitler stands out in sharp illuminating relief. He casts a giant shadow which seems to spread out, enveloping. Vollmer stops just once to look back.

192. LONG ANGLE SHOT HITLER OVER VOLLMER'S SHOULDER

He stands there in the light of the torches—menacing, impressive—just as he has stood a million times before, looking around him as if time had turned back and there was a world out there in

front of him, trembling. This is all that Vollmer remains to see. He then stumbles, running, into the darkness.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK
END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE ON:

**193-200. EXTERIOR STREET
SERIES OF HIGHLY IMPRESSIONISTIC
SHOTS OF VOLLMER NIGHT**

As he runs in a headlong illogical desperation-prodded retreat—including several tilt shots that show him closer and closer, the fear building and burgeoning. He keeps looking over his shoulder at an invisible pursuer.

ABRUPT CUT TO:

**201. SHOT LOOKING DOWN AN
ALLEY**

As Vollmer races in from its street entrance. He stops abruptly in a small blob of light and stares down in front of him. There, in the shadow, is a giant swastika. He looks up.

**202. ANGLE SHOT
HIS POINT OF VIEW
A BUILDING ANTENNA**

Which has somehow cast the shadow.

**203. ANOTHER ANGLE OF
VOLLMER**

As he races back out from the alley.
CUT TO:

204. HIGH ANGLE OF HIM

As he runs across an empty street.

**205. TOP HAT SHOT SHOOTING
ACROSS A CURB**

As Vollmer runs toward the camera, trips, falls headfirst toward the lens.

**206. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING
DOWN AT HIM**

As he struggles to rise.

CUT TO:

**207. TIGHT PROFILE SHOT OF
HIM**

As he recoils. Whip pan over to a used bookstore window. Several aged books are lined up in a row, but only one seems highlighted. This is *Mein Kampf*, Hitler's face staring out at him from the jacket.

**208-214. ANOTHER SERIES OF
IMPRESSIONISTIC SHOTS
OF VOLLMER**

As he races down empty night-enveloped streets.

CUT TO:

**215. INTERIOR HALLWAY
MEETING HALL SHOOTING**

**TOWARD THE ALLEY EXIT
NIGHT**

Vollmer pushes his way in from the alley, breathless, runs the length of the hall toward the camera, flings himself against the closed double doors, pounding on them until they give way.

CUT TO:

**216. INTERIOR MEETING HALL
NIGHT**

A dark silent room—the chairs like rows of ghosts staring at him. He stumbles over a couple of them and winds up on



his hands and knees clutching at one of them—his face buried on the empty seat. There are the sounds of footsteps ringing hollowly on the concrete floor of the hallway. Vollmer puts his head up, listening. Whip pan over to the double doors as they open. Frank stands there. Behind him we see Stanley and a handful of other "troopers."

**217. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING
TOWARD VOLLMER
FRANK'S POINT OF VIEW**

He closes the doors behind him when he sees Vollmer's posture, takes a step into the room.

FRANK

(his voice low and tentative)

Pete?

Vollmer turns to him, still on his hands and knees.

FRANK

We . . . we were wondering where you went.

(then eyeing him carefully)

What's the matter with you?

VOLLMER

Nothing. Nothing's the matter with me.

He gets to his feet slowly, his face pale, sweaty.

VOLLMER

You tell them that. You go out there and tell them that. There's nothing wrong with me. I'm still in charge. I'm still the number one.

(his voice rises)

You tell them that! You tell them nothing's changed!

He lurches toward Frank like a drunk, pushes his way past Frank's extended hand of help.

VOLLMER

I'll tell them myself! I'll tell them myself that everything's just the same as it was!

He kicks open the double doors and looks straight at the group of men who stand in the hallway staring at him.

VOLLMER

Look!

(he points to them)

You serve—I lead! Understand? You serve and I lead!

(he whirls around to look at Frank)

He picked me, Frank. Out of everybody—he picked me.

He lurches back into the meeting hall past Frank, stumbling toward the platform.

VOLLMER

(he shouts again)

He picked me! Nobody else! Me! He picked me!

He stands there near the platform suddenly drained of strength, his head down, his arms limp at his sides—and now the voice is like some childlike rhyme.

VOLLMER

You've got to believe me. You guys have to believe me. He picked me.

**218. LONG SHOT ACROSS THE
ROOM OF FRANK**

Who bites his lip, turns, motions to the others to continue out, then walks into the hallway and closes the door behind them.

ABRUPT CUT TO:

219. INTERIOR MEETING HALL

Vollmer stands there, his head down, his eyes closed. Suddenly his name is called out on a loud speaker. It is a blaring, detonating intrusion.

VOICE

(on loud speaker)

Vollmer!

CUT TO:

220. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

He whirls around looking toward the wall.

CUT TO:

**221. SHOT OF LOUD SPEAKER
ON THE WALL**

The voice again blares out.

VOICE
(on loud speaker)

Vollmer!

222. SHOT OF VOLLMER

As he whirls toward the platform.

223. SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER OF THE PLATFORM

Hitler stands there by a microphone. Each time he speaks the voice is magnified.

HITLER

I didn't pick you, Mr. Vollmer. You picked me. You chose my ideas. You involved my name. You stole my slogans. So now, Mr. Vollmer, you must take whatever else comes with it.

224. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING DOWN AT VOLLMER

Who looks up at him, now torn beyond any remembrance. He simply waits for whatever else must come.

HITLER

In the past I've given you suggestions, Mr. Vollmer. Now I give orders.

225. SHOT OF HITLER

As he stares down at Vollmer.

HITLER

And from now on, Mr. Vollmer, you must be built of steel. No soft gaps of sentiment. Steel, Mr. Vollmer. Like we handled Nick. Like we've handled the mobs. Like we've made the speeches. And gradually, bit by bit, forge something in our hands. First an idea, then a force.

The camera moves in for a:

226. MUCH TIGHTER SHOT OF HITLER

The insane eyes menacing and hypnotizing.

HITLER

Just as I did it before. With my own hands.

(then louder—holding out his hands)

With my own hands, Mr. Vollmer.

He moves away from the microphone to the end of the proscenium and looks down at Vollmer.

HITLER

The old man, Mr. Vollmer. The Jew. He'll be back again. Tomorrow night. The next night. I know him. I know the type. We sent them into the ovens. But always ... always there was a handful left to point a finger.

(a pause)

His kind, Mr. Vollmer. His kind are dangerous. They talk. They think. They plant seeds. They hold us back. He takes out a luger from his coat,

throws it to Vollmer, who instinctively catches it.

HITLER

(his voice is a throaty guttural whisper)

Kill him, Mr. Vollmer. Kill the old man.

227. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

VOLLMER

Ernst? Kill Ernst?

228. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD HITLER

HITLER

Tonight. Now. He'll be in his room.

229. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

As he stares down at the gun in his hand, then up toward Hitler.

VOLLMER

(nodding)

I'll do it now. I'll do it right now.

He turns and starts toward the double doors.

230. ANGLE SHOT OVER HIS SHOULDER

As he reaches the doors, of Hitler still standing there.

HITLER

And, Mr. Vollmer ... when you come back, there's much we have to talk about. Plans. Campaigns. Ideas. The next steps. This is only the beginning, Mr. Vollmer. This is just the early dawn. It will be a long day.

DISSOLVE TO:

231. INTERIOR GANZ APARTMENT NIGHT FULL SHOT THE ROOM

Ganz stands by the window staring out, his shoulders slumped, his face quietly resigned. He turns, walks slowly over to the table toward the humidor, reaches in to it, then holds it up, tips it over. It's empty. Ganz smiles ever so slightly, puts the humidor down, stares at his empty pipe.

232. MOVING SHOT WITH HIM

As he walks back over to the window and stares out again. He starts, looks, then turns very slowly from the window as we hear the sound of the front door from the lower floor open and shut, then slow measured footsteps starting up the steps. The camera moves in for a:

233. TIGHTER CLOSE SHOT GANZ

As he stands there, pipe in his mouth. He slowly takes out the pipe, puts it down on a corner table, and stands there facing the door as the footsteps continue up the steps into the corridor and then toward the door. There is the sound of the doorknob and then the door opens.

234. SHOT OVER GANZ'S SHOULDER OF THE OPEN DOOR

Vollmer stands there in silhouette and then walks into the room and then into the light. He closes the door behind him and turns to face Ganz.

235. CLOSE SHOT GANZ

Who turns to study him.

GANZ

(half smiles)

The couch tonight, Peter?

236. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING TOWARD VOLLMER

VOLLMER

(lonely)

Not tonight.

237. CLOSE SHOT GANZ

GANZ

What then?

238. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

VOLLMER

You wouldn't listen to me, Ernst. You didn't pay any attention to me.

239. TWO SHOT THE TWO MEN

GANZ

On the contrary. I listened to you all I could. I heard all that I was able to stand.

(he shakes his head)

I couldn't listen anymore.

VOLLMER

I couldn't even begin to tell you what's happened, Ernst.

(a pause)

It's too incredible. It's too unbelievable.

240. CLOSE SHOT GANZ

GANZ

(the smile persists)

I'm listening.

241. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

VOLLMER

You wouldn't believe me anyway, but I can tell you this much. We're on the march now, Ernst. We're on the move. From now on ... we go forward and up.

(he shakes his head)

There's no stopping us.

242. CLOSE SHOT GANZ

Who smiles, shakes his head, half turns, walks over to a chair and sits down.

GANZ

No stopping you, Peter? An old man "stopped" you tonight. He stopped you with a few words. A mild threat. A little logic.

(the smile fades now and the voice becomes ice cold)

He stopped you with a truth.

VOLLMER

You're wrong, Ernst. It isn't just me anymore. There's someone else. Someone behind us. Someone you'd ... someone you'd tremble at.

243. CLOSER ANGLE GANZ

GANZ

He'd have to be a very imposing figure, Peter. More imposing than what I'm in the presence of this moment.

244. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

As he slowly takes the luger out and holds it in his hand.

245. CLOSE SHOT GANZ

Who looks at it then up into Vollmer's face.

GANZ

More imposing than that, too, Peter. VOLLMER

Only because you don't think I'll use it. Proving that you don't know me, Ernst.

246. CLOSER ANGLE GANZ

He looks at Vollmer through slitted, studying eyes.

GANZ

I know you, Peter. I know you. From a ravaged little boy wanting love ... to a torn man looking for respect ... identity ... pride. But short of all this—you'll have to settle for fear.

(he leans forward in the chair and points to the gun. His voice is very quiet)

But I don't fear you, Peter. So you may do what you have in mind at any time you wish—with this last one reminder to you. You never kill an idea with a bullet. Only with a better idea ... a more decent idea ... a newer one. Never, Peter. Never with a bullet.

247. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

Who raises the gun.

VOLLMER

I'm made out of steel now, Ernst, hear me. I'm made out of steel. There's no more sentiment now. No more softness. Just purpose now. Just will. He steadies the gun, aiming it. Ganz slowly rises from the chair, takes the pipe from the table, holds it in his hand for a moment, lays it aside, faces Vollmer with total calmness.

GANZ

So, Peter? Aren't I close enough?

248. CLOSER ANGLE VOLLMER

VOLLMER

(his lips tremble)

You're close enough, Ernst.

249. CLOSE SHOT GANZ

GANZ

Then shoot, Peter. Kill. Destroy me.

250. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

VOLLMER

(his voice betrays a trembling nervousness)

You're ... you're anxious, aren't you, Ernst?

251. CLOSE SHOT GANZ

GANZ

Not at all. Impatient. And a little bored.

252. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

VOLLMER

With living?

253. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE

SHOT GANZ

GANZ

With having to live in a time that produces people like you. Twenty years ago, Peter ... you made death inviting. You still do. So do me the goodness to get it over with as quickly as possible.

(a silence)

I'm waiting, Peter.

254. CLOSE SHOT VOLLMER

The sweat pouring down his face, the fingers trembling on the trigger. He gulps, swallows—almost gags, blinks his eyes, tries to focus, holds the gun up again to steady it, and then suddenly he looks up and hears the filtered, echoey, and yet piercing voice of Hitler.

HITLER'S VOICE

Kill him, Vollmer. Kill him. Kill the old man. Kill the old Jew. Use strength, Vollmer. Use will. Be made of steel, Vollmer. Kill him. Kill him.

The voice builds and builds as we move in tighter and tighter on Vollmer's face. Whip pan down to the muzzle of the luger as suddenly it explodes in a detonating thunderous flash.

255. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING

TOWARD VOLLMER

From behind Ganz. Ganz stumbles backward, collides against a chair, falls down to his knees, grabs the chair for support and then remains there on his knees.

256. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP

AT VOLLMER

Who stares down at the old man, his lips trembling perceptively. At this given moment he's torn between a stunning fear and shock at what he's done, and yet another unknown emotion that seems to persist inside him—a perverse, ugly emotion that has no room for mourning or no

relationship to the horror that he's just committed. It is this latter emotion that comes to the surface and blocks out everything else.

VOLLMER

(his voice very low)

So, Ernst? Am I made out of steel?

257. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING DOWN AT GANZ

Who looks up at him, stares at him, studies him.

GANZ

(a thin, whispering voice)

All steel, Peter. All strength. But at the expense of the things that most other men have. Some fragments of decency that tell them right from wrong. That let them feel guilt and dishonor.

(a pause)

That make them ... that make them love, Peter. You have steel ... but now you have no heart.

The camera pans down for a:

258. SHOT OF GANZ

His head slowly bending forward. We hear the sound of footsteps leaving the room, the door opening and closing.

CUT TO:

259. INTERIOR MEETING HALL

NIGHT

We hear Vollmer's footsteps outside in the corridor approaching the double doors. They open and he enters the hall. He walks up the steps to the stage, leans against the podium, closes his eyes for a moment.

HITLER'S VOICE

(from the back of the room)

Mr. Vollmer?

Vollmer slowly looks up.

HITLER'S VOICE

Sentimentality?

VOLLMER

None.

HITLER'S VOICE

Steel tonight?

VOLLMER

(nods)

Steel.

HITLER'S VOICE

And no regrets.

VOLLMER

None.

HITLER'S VOICE

What did you destroy tonight, Mr. Vollmer?

VOLLMER

Only a disease. A growth on our flesh that had to be removed.

HITLER'S VOICE

Not a man then?

260. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE

SHOT VOLLMER

VOLLMER

Hardly a man.

**261. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING
DOWN ON THE BARE ROOM**

As Hitler rises from his seat in the rear, steps into the light.

HITLER

(his voice a screeching,
piercing, enveloping thing)

Mr. Vollmer! How did it feel?

**262. CLOSE ANGLE SHOT
VOLLMER**

As he holds up the luger, staring at it.

VOLLMER

It felt ... it felt like I was immortal.

Whip pan over to Hitler.

HITLER

Mr. Vollmer ... we are *immortal*!

Whip pan back over to Vollmer who throws back his head and starts to laugh a full throated, almost hysterical, laugh. He lurches away from the podium, the laughter coming out in thick, uncontrolled gusts. He winds up against the back wall festooned by flags and pictures.

**263. CLOSE PROFILE SHOT
VOLLMER**

Leaning against the wall. Suddenly the profile is illuminated by light.

264. ANOTHER ANGLE VOLLMER

As he whirls around to face the room. The lights have been turned on. A uniformed policeman and two plain-clothesmen stand there in the auditorium.

DETECTIVE

You Peter Vollmer?

**265. REVERSE ANGLE LOOKING
TOWARD VOLLMER
AUDIENCE'S POINT OF
VIEW**

He stands there cornered, his back against the wall, his eyes wide.

DETECTIVE

We have a warrant for your arrest, Vollmer. The charge is complicity in murder. The victim's name was Nicholas Bloss. I think it's familiar to you. Throw the gun away and walk toward us with your hands up.

266. ANOTHER ANGLE VOLLMER

As he suddenly bolts toward the side of the stage, leaping down the steps, racing through the double doors. A bullet whines and then crashes against the high part of the metal door as Vollmer goes through it.

ABRUPT CUT TO:

267. EXTERIOR ALLEY NIGHT

As the alley door is pushed open and Vollmer starts out. Three shots ring out behind him. Their impact propels him forward to the metal railing. He jack-knives



over it and flops down to land on his back in the alley.

**268. ANGLE SHOT LOOKING UP
TOWARD THE THREE
POLICEMEN**

Who come out of the alley door and stare down at him. A slow pan over for a:

269. SHOT OF VOLLMER

Who lies there in pain and shock, his eyes wide open. His eyes move downward toward his stomach. He reaches down and touches himself, then looks up through pain-hazed eyes at the blood on his fingers.

**270. EXTREMELY TIGHT CLOSE
SHOT VOLLMER**

As he studies his fingers, then his eyes move back toward the policemen.

VOLLMER

There's ... there's something very wrong. There's been a mistake made. I'm made out of steel. You understand? I'm made out of steel.

The camera starts a slow dolly away as two of the policemen come down the steps. One of them can be seen covering Vollmer with his coat. Another walks toward a police car parked at the other end of the alley and we hear his voice calling for an ambulance. The dolly con-

tinues until Hitler comes into the frame. He watches emotionlessly, then turns the corner of the alley and starts a slow walk down the empty night street. The camera pans up so that we see the shadow of the walking man on the buildings—glant and distorted and growing larger as the footsteps continue.

SERLING'S VOICE

Where will he go next? This phantom from another time. This resurrected ghost of a previous nightmare. Chicago. Los Angeles. Miami, Florida. Vincennes, Indiana. Syracuse, New York. Any place ... every place ... where there's hate. Where there's prejudice. Where there's bigotry.

(a pause)

He's alive. He's alive so long as these evils exist. Remember that when he comes to your town. Remember it when you hear his voice speaking out through others. Remember it ... when you hear a name called. A minority attacked. Any blind unreasoning assault on a people or any human being. He's alive ... because through these things ... we keep him alive! The camera starts a slow pan up until we're shooting down on a walking shadow.

SLOW FADE TO BLACK:

THE END

THE TUBE FANTASTIC



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John Lithgow in "The Doll."

Looking back and ahead to the future.

by TYSON BLUE

An amazing story from *The Twilight Zone* tops the list in this month's column—the amazing story of how a unique and touching script leaped two decades and one television network to link two anthology series together.

Longtime *TZ* readers will have doubtless figured out that we are referring to the May 4 broadcast on *Amazing Stories* of Richard Matheson's "The Doll," the romantic fantasy about a lonely bachelor

whose life is poignantly changed by a beautiful doll.

Those readers would have recognized the story at once, since the script was printed, along with a short article about its history, in the June 1982 issue of this magazine. In that article, scriptwriter Matheson told *TZ* historian Marc Scott Zicree about the genesis of the story:

"We bought a doll for one of our daughters," he explained, "and the doll's face was so mature and so

lovely that the idea evolved: What if a man who was not married bought a doll like that for his niece, and the niece didn't care for it and he had to take it back—only he didn't want to take it back, because the face just looked so fascinating."

The script that grew from that idea was commissioned for the original *Twilight Zone* series by then-producer Bart Granet and was supposed to air during the show's fifth season (1963-64) with Martin Balsam and Mary LaRoche playing the leads. Before production could begin, however, Granet was replaced by William Froug, who shelved the episode in favor of another script dealing with a mysterious doll, Charles Beaumont's "Living Doll," (see *TZ*, Dec. '82).

The script lay dormant after that, and nothing more was done with it until 1982, when it was published as a "lost" *Twilight Zone* episode in this magazine. At that time, Matheson expressed doubt that it would ever air, unless perhaps on PBS, because romantic fantasy was simply not hard-edged enough for the market.

Fortunately, he was proven wrong on May 4, 1986, when "The Doll," brushed up a bit for modern times, aired, not on the reborn *Twilight Zone* series, but as the twenty-second episode of *Amazing Stories*.

There had been a change, if not in the audience, then at least in the market. Matheson, now a member of the *Amazing Stories* story committee, explains how the script came to be aired:

"They do that kind of story on *Amazing Stories*. At the time I said that it wasn't the kind of thing that goes anymore, there was no *Amazing Stories*. When it came on, I just submitted it. I don't know whether I was actually with the show yet."

Matheson adds that the script as written turned out to be too long, but after it was cut down, they simply shot it. And he sounds more than pleased by the results:

"Lithgow's marvelous; he's a brilliant actor, I was delighted with both performances, his and Annie Helm's. I loved the episode. It was well worth the wait. And I don't think it would have been that good on the early *Twilight Zone*. It would've been in black and white, and they wouldn't have had as big a budget, and I don't think you could do any better than Lithgow!"

Matheson was unable to talk about the show's plans for the upcoming season due to the characteristic secrecy of Spielberg productions. But we do know that *Amazing Stories* is moving to Monday nights this fall, airing at 8:30 p.m. after a new series called *A.I.F.* And according to Catherine Leach, assistant to publicist Sally van Slyke, the directors so far include Joe Dante, Robert Zemeckis, and Danny DeVito, who have already finished their stories.

It is also uncertain this early in the season whether executive producer Steven Spielberg is going to direct any of the upcoming shows or not. "We've just really gotten started," Leach explains. But she believes that even though the series has aired twenty-four new shows, leaving only twenty for Spielberg to deliver under his original forty-four episode contract, there will still be twenty-two new episodes made for the new season.

The news at *Twilight Zone* is that it will move also. The show has been picked up and will be shown on Saturday nights at 10 p.m., a time slot story editor and creative consultant Rockne O'Bannon hopes will improve the show's ratings.

At this writing it is too early to tell what, if any, other changes will be made, but O'Bannon does have some ideas about the series' basic direction:

"We're going to get together with Phil DeGuere, the executive producer, and talk about additional writing staff, that sort of thing," he explains. "The show, so far as I understand, is going to be very much the same as it was last season. Same multi-length segments, and we're going to try to get a lot of adaptations of short stories, and as many name directors as we can."

O'Bannon also expressed hope that Harlan Ellison might return to the show this season. Ellison left the show after the network's New York office nixed production of "Nackles," an Ellison script about bigotry at Christmastime.

"I think they're in discussions with him now," O'Bannon says. "Last season I was very hopeful that he'd be back. This season, it doesn't seem so likely, but we're working toward it. He'd like to come back, too, so I'd like to think that we can work out some sort of arrangement."

One new writer O'Bannon would

like to add this season is Stephen King. "We'd like to have him do an original for us," he says, "maybe even direct it!"

Although King has expressed some reluctance to direct another feature film anytime soon, O'Bannon feels that that might not keep him from considering a TZ story, since the production is so much shorter. "He could be in and out in two weeks!" O'Bannon promises.

There has, alas, been one casualty among the anthology shows—**Alfred Hitchcock Presents** was not renewed. In fact, the show's offices have already shut down, and all publicity materials on the show have been returned by NBC to Universal Studios.

Like all the network anthology shows, *Hitchcock* had ratings problems, but for some reason, theirs seemed to be worse than anyone else's. Some critics suggested that part of the problem might be that long-time viewers had already seen the original versions of the show's updated stories, and already knew how they came out, even though some stories—the new version of Ray Bradbury's "The Jar" leaps most easily to mind—were altered so radically as to be unrecognizable.

But that's a view executive producer Christopher Crowe clearly contests. He offered these parting thoughts about the series: "Aesthetically, I think the show was finally on balance, second to none on tv, and we did a good job on it. I think we finally fulfilled the aesthetic mission that we had. We tried to deliver a show that was good from a literary point of view and a visual point of view, and I think we did it."

He added with real conviction: "We were happy, and often when you do a show you're not. You go, 'If we'd only had a little more of this, or a little more of that, a little better tools to work with...' But I don't feel that way this time. I don't think any of the staff does. We really did a show we are proud to have done, and critically, we did wonderfully. They were kind to us."

Crowe is moving into the motion picture field for now, working on a TriStar film with Brian DePalma and has other projects in the works beyond that.

Awarded another two-year renewal, **Tales from the Darkside** is already in the middle of production for its new shows. Their contract

calls for forty-two shows, twenty-four in New York and eighteen in California.

"At this point," says story editor Tom Allen, "we're up to nine in New York and we've finished five in California. So we're right on schedule."

Allen explains that because Laurel doesn't want to tip its hand before stories are scheduled, he couldn't tell us much about specific stories. But he did say that *Darkside* will be featuring tales from a number of masters of the horror and fantasy field. Like Stephen King, who has contributed a story called "Sorry, Right Number." And Robert Bloch, who has contributed two stories and one original script.

Allen compared one of Bloch's stories, "Beetles," which appeared in *Weird Tales* during the thirties, to King's "They're Creeping Up On You," from *Creepshow*. "There is a kind of an overlap there," Allen chuckles. "It depends on how gruesome we can make the ending."

"Beetles" is scheduled to be directed by John Sutherland, a.k.a. John Harrison until this season, when he found that there were three directors by that name in the United States and Canada and changed his name.

There are two George Romero scripts—"They happen to be my favorites," Allen exclaims, "but that's total bias!"—but unfortunately, Romero's commitments to two other features, as well as the ever-possible *Pet Semetary*, now set to begin shooting in late 1986 or early '87 in Maine, will keep him from directing any shows this year.

This year will also see the production of five scripts from Michael McDowell, author of the acclaimed *Blackwater* and a regular *Darkside* scripter and director. And McDowell's friend, Clive Barker, whom Allen called "the new Stephen King," has contributed a story and a script as well. The story is from Barker's acclaimed *Books of Blood* collection.

Laurel also has plans for a new series to be called **Moment of Fear**. The pilot has already been shot from a McDowell script called "Attic Suite." But unlike *Darkside*, *Moment of Fear* will concentrate on straight mystery, suspense, and thriller material, without the presence of a supernatural element. That show will air late in the third or fourth quarter of this year, and we will bring you more news on that series as it develops. ■



Steve Guttenberg and Ally Sheedy greet *Short Circuit's* nasty little nipper.

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Deadly special effects and lethal machinery—then quietly satisfying doom.

Short Circuit is a nasty little Frankenstein monster of a movie. Its creators hacked chunks and fragments from other films which had made it on *Variety's* success charts, stitched and bolted them together—ignoring the fact that some morsels were already in a state of advanced decay—and then sent the resultant mess staggering onto the nation's screens, crying hopefully: "It *lives!* It *lives!*"

But it does not live, and because it is so badly constricted (you guys think being a Doctor Frankenstein is easy!?!), its guts keep falling out right in front of the audience, schtick after schtick, scene after scene. So instead of being able to laugh at this or that feeble little gag being paraded before us, we are forced—by this or that accidentally exposed

mechanism and this or that inadvertently revealed inept preparation—into yet another insight into the tacky minds that thought up and built this dreary attempt to make money.

One flaw apparently shared by all the creative geniuses involved in *Short Circuit* is a truly staggering lack of any moral sense, and I'm not approaching morality from any high ground here, but merely from a commercial point of view. They grasped the idea that various movies made a lot of money because their non-human heroes were cute-looking and had funny voices and were simply adorable when they tried to do things we humans do all the time without thinking, like eating candy and dancing. But what these geniuses didn't notice, probably because they are incapable of being able to do so as

the whole notion is not in their conceptual universe, is that these little sweeties came from essentially innocent backgrounds; that they are mostly modern parables for angels.

E.T., to give an obvious example, was one of a race that had visited Earth because they wanted to walk through a redwood forest. Sweet and simple as that. Their little hearts glowed and beat visibly and vulnerably in their thiny, alien chests, and they wanted to see our flowers is all. E.T.'s problems all rose from the contrast between his co-operative love of nature and our Faustian desire to master it. It is a reasonably uncluttered morality tale, and a number of children and adults found it encouraging and paid money to see it, and then the schemers piling together *Short Circuit* found that encouraging. But they got it all wrong, poor simps.

The problem, God help us, is that the origins of their cute little non-human hero are not angelic, they are diabolic: he is a lethal robot, a killing machine designed to destroy with laser beams any survivors of an opposing army. They may crawl, they may hide, they may cower in tanks, but the sole mission of this apocalyptic little bastard, his entire purpose, is to burn every last soldier to a smoking crisp. And just in case we don't fully grasp the horror of his function—if we have trouble visualizing it because we are stupid enough to go to movies like this—we are given a full demo (along with, we later realize when the camera pulls back, the pick of the Pentagon brass) of how wantonly and effectively destructive our little nipper is as he sears and blasts every bunker, troop carrier, and whatnot in his way. We even see him burning up scores of humans, although later (Hey! It's only a joke, man!) we see they're only dummies (hah, hah).

I even have a horrible suspicion that this movie may actually believe it's an anti-war tract. Certainly there are various, often reliable clichés brought in which may have been meant to speak to that purpose. Or it could be that they were introduced several hundred story conferences ago and only improperly weeded out. That would go along with the movie's general ineptness.

A female animal lover, for example, played pretty boringly, I'm afraid, by Ally Sheedy, has a houseful of cats and dogs and a few other exotic pets, but I never once really got the feeling she was taking care of them. She also is a vegetarian and has a little snack truck featuring that cuisine. But whoever set up her kitchen failed entirely to get the feeling of that sort of cook: there are even evidences of prefab frozen stuff, which would be considered vile by anyone of that ilk. She does have one reaction when she sees that the cute little metal man is not an E.T.-type extraterrestrial but a weapon, which suggests that her character may originally have had character. But that's it. She is otherwise just your standard dip made of isn't-it-funny-a-girl-like-her-actually-tries-to-think jokes.

The scientist responsible for creating our non-human killing device (I suppose you could call him the human hero, a new subclass shaping up) never once seems to suspect that what he's been up to might be just a tiny bit horrific. He does balk at meeting the generals who are ultimately paying his salary, but it doesn't seem to be out of any sort of conviction, just intellectual snobbery, possibly even laziness. He is played by Steve Guttenberg. Also boringly.

The cute thing itself is glaringly badly designed for a battlefield device since it is extremely fragile. All its little parts are right out there in the open to be shot at, and it's an absolute cinch to tilt on its treads so that it lands helpless as a beetle on its back. The cleverest aspect of its design are its eyes: the circular shutters are blue (though they never move, come to think of it), giving it the sort of Disney baby stare we like to see in our non-human heroes. It is brought to life by a stray lightning bolt (what else?), which makes it talk the way I imagine a Smurf talks (I am not going to check out how a Smurf actually talks; I'll go through a lot for this column, but I have to draw the line somewhere) except when it talks like John Wayne or somebody else lovable from movies or tv. And although much is made of the idea that the device lives (I'm not sure just why, unless it's the essen-

tial underlying stupidity of the whole concept), it never really seems to be anything but a laboriously-animated piece of machinery.

I have no idea if the makers of *Short Circuit* will make the sort of money they hoped to, but in a way, I guess that I hope they do, since the damned thing doesn't seem to be good for anything else.

Wait a minute. There was one moment that almost worked: when three robots imitate the Three Stooges. That works for the first glimpse and maybe a beat or two more. I bring that up just to show you I'm scrupulously fair.

Critters is a variation of the *Terminator* plot, except that the Arnold Schwarzenegger role is played by a bunch of hairy basketballs with lots of sharp teeth and the good guys from *Out There* are a couple of shape-changers who sometimes get a little carried away hunting down the basketballs and destroy the surrounding terrain. The whole thing could have used a lot of editing; the basketballs are brought into full sight a little too soon and have pretty much lost their impact by

the final third of the picture (in spite of variations), so it is by no means a milestone in filmic history. But, if you're feeling unpicky, it's a perfectly okay entertainment. It's a pity its creators weren't tougher on themselves, though because they might have pulled it together into a nice little grotesque comedy.

The idea of being among those very, very few to survive after something ghastly wipes out almost everybody else is among the spookiest. A long while ago there was a movie based on M.P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud* (an excellent, if flawed, novel well worth looking up), which told of Mel Ferrar wandering around a deserted New York hoping to God he wasn't the last man on Earth, and how he eventually ran into Inger Stevens and Harry Belafonte and thus became part of the last triangle on Earth. Now from New Zealand (you don't have to be in New York to be the last man on Earth, bubie) we have **The Quiet Earth**, which is not bad at all. In fact, it's decidedly the best film in our special area this stretch.

Quiet Earth is directed in a quiet,

In *Critters*, a monster comes out of the chifforobe to get Nadine van der Velde.





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Anabelle Lanyon, Legend's blithe spirit, lights up an otherwise dreary film.

but most satisfactorily doomish, manner by Geoff Murphy. But its secret weapon is its star and co-writer, Bruno Lawrence, who plays the unfortunate fellow who suspects he may have had the dubious good luck to be the final specimen of his species.

Lawrence is a particularly interesting tall man on Earth to watch since most L.M.O.E.'s tend to be actors of no particular insight or intelligence who simply stumble about in the rubble without ever suggesting that the spectacular implications of their extraordinary predicament have really sunk into their curly little heads.

Lawrence, on the other hand, does a swell job of first not getting it, then fending it off with increasing desperation, then getting it so well that it temporarily drives him crazy. The crazy scene, by the way, is extremely well handled: it's a kind of magical ritual in which he scatters standing photos of the great warrior-leaders of recent history about the terraced lawn of a palatial mansion he's taken over and proceeds to tell them all off and to proclaim the

glorious commencement of his own reign, a proclamation which is unceremoniously interrupted when the electrical power expires, leaving him drunk with a dead microphone on a darkened balcony. Not bad.

Eventually Lawrence comes across Alison Routledge and starts up an uneven affair with her, which is complicated by the arrival of Peter Smith as a Maori in the Belafonte role. I kept waiting for them to make the movie go stupid (these films usually start wandering aimlessly when the sexual element's introduced). But I must say *Quiet Earth* neatly avoided the many banal possibilities and kept its gentle tension going very nicely right through to the end, which end is both satisfactory and pleasantly mysterious. Understatedly effective, workmanlike and an intelligent mull on its topic altogether.

Ridley Scott has made a bold try in *Legend* to do a mythic fairy tale and, in bits and pieces, damn near pulls it off, so I wish I could be kinder and more enthusiastic about the movie. But I can't because, the truth is, it just doesn't work.

The unicorns, for example, are horses with horns stuck on them, that's all in the world they are, and Scott, for all the slow motion and lighting effects and fluffy stuff blowing around in the air, never manages to make them look like anything else. And since it's vital to the whole movie that you believe in Scott's unicorns, that makes it dead from the start. Then his dwarves and such are, I know it seems an odd complaint, not *human* enough. Make-up folk seem to be hell bent on over-doing dwarves and trolls and such-like. They love to bury the humans until they are totally hidden beneath hair and foam rubber and resemble nothing more than cheap carpet padding. There is one great fairy in the movie, though—a jealous, curly-headed one played by Anabelle Lanyon, who is just super. I'd believe in her anytime.

Another excellent item, as long as I'm on the good stuff, is a demon dress that does a diabolic dance of temptation. (I sure wish the rest of the movie had been up to that dress.) There is also a swell horrible feast featuring a highly satisfactory stew with a skull in it, among other very naughty things. And Tim Curry works very hard at being a devil, to some good effect. But again, the make-up, though highly imaginative, doesn't let enough of him show through to act, which would have been a challenge anyway since the lines he has to speak (I must own that the lines throughout tend to be unfortunate) are sometimes real winners.

The major flaw in the movie is that the hero and the heroine (Tom Cruise and Mia Sara) are both just awful, no other word for it. No matter how they are shot, or what they are given to do, they are resounding ninnies, and much worse, (since you can be a perfectly satisfactory hero or heroine in a fairy tale and a ninny, too) they are clearly nasty little ninnies. It is simply impossible to like them or care what happens to them. And if you don't care what happens to the hero and the heroine of a fairy tale, that fairy tale is in big trouble. Such is the case, I am sorry to say, for I do believe Scott meant well and tried very hard with *Legend*. ■

Classy vamps, creeping flesh, and weird bikers—videos bring seldom-seen flicks, and a passel of corpses, back from the dead.

Not long ago, I strolled into my neighborhood video rental shop and was thrilled to discover on the shelves a videocassette of **Daughters of Darkness** (Continental Video), a true horror classic that I'd heard about and read about for years but had never seen. The film was made in Belgium in 1971, and apparently it did not play widely in U.S. theaters at that time, or since. To my knowledge, it has never been on television, even in edited form. But suddenly, lo and behold!, there it was in my local video store. Needless to say, I clutched the cassette to my heart and took it home.

It is a wonderful film, and, after watching it, it occurred to me that there are any number of really excellent horror films that are seldom seen nowadays because they are no longer in theatrical release and rarely if ever play on tv. But, thankfully, some of these films are now available on videocassettes, so even if you missed them the first time around—or if they never even played in your town—you can see them now for the price of a rental.

I suspect the reason why many of these seldom-seen horror films seem to slip through the cracks in the first place is that the best of them don't fit into any recognizable category. That is to say, they aren't ghost movies or werewolf movies or alien invasion movies or mad slasher movies—at least not in the traditional sense. For example, *Daughters of Darkness* is a vampire movie of sorts, but it doesn't fit the conventional *Dracula* mold—it's one of a kind. The same holds true for the other films that made my "seldom-seen" list. They weren't made as attempts to cash in on the popularity of a particular fad, and so many of

them were over-shadowed by more trendy films that had much less to offer.

Daughters of Darkness was directed by Harry Kumel and is one of the strangest horror films ever made. Briefly, it brings together four characters—three women and a man—in a seaside resort in Belgium during the off-season, when they have the place to themselves. Stefan and Valerie are honeymooners, while Elizabeth and Ilona are lovers—and perhaps vampires. But in Kumel's film there are no fangs or coffins or bats, none of the traditional trappings of the vampire cinema. This movie is frightening on the psychological level, as opposed to the purely physical.

Kumel plays on a basic human fear—that even two people who love each other might not really know each other very well. Of course, this is particularly true for newlyweds, and, in the course of the film, Stefan and Valerie come to know a good bit about each other that would be better off hidden, thanks primarily to Elizabeth who seems to bring out the worst in everyone. She is Countess Elizabeth Bathory, and though she claims to be a descendant of the historical Countess Bathory who slaughtered young women and bathed in their blood back in the sixteenth-century, it is also possible that she is that same woman, kept alive and young for hundreds of years by drinking the blood of her victims.

This is a film about seduction—not merely physical seduction but the kind of seduction in which one person loses himself or herself to another completely. In the course of the movie, the male character (played brilliantly by John Karlen, now a star of tv's *Cagney and Lacy*)



Daughters of Darkness: Who can tell the seducer from the seduced?

gradually loses his traditional position as seducer to become the seduced, the victim of the women. Kumel's film turns our familiar social conventions upside down. There is a strong feminist message here. Stefan is the kind of man who does not want to love; he only wants to possess Valerie as a piece of property, and he pays for this desire. As Elizabeth explains to the young bride: "He dreams of making out of you what every man wants to make out of every woman—a slave, a thing, an object for pleasure." But, of course, men are not the only ones who want to turn people into objects. This is precisely what Elizabeth does as well, to her slave Ilona, to Valerie, and to the victims who die so she can keep living.

Daughters of Darkness, is subtle, compelling, and complex, and it is also a visually beautiful film. The winter landscape of seaside Belgium is striking, and Kumel's uses of the colors red and blue throughout the movie returns us again and again to the prevailing motifs of blood and night. If you've never seen this film, do so. If you're one of the lucky ones who saw it back in the early seventies, take another look. It's worth it.

Horror fans know by heart almost every nineteenth-century period film Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing ever made, but there are two that made my "seldom-seen" list because they aren't part of the famous Hammer Productions *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* series and they haven't been available in theaters or on tv for a long time. **The Creeping Flesh** (RCA/Columbia), released in 1972, is another of those films that doesn't fit into any category. Cushing, playing his usual slightly mad scientist role, discovers a gigantic primitive skeleton that he believes is the actual incarnation of evil. He learns, quite accidentally, that when water touches the skeleton it begins to grow flesh, to return to life—sort of an instant monster. Cushing's dream is to use the beast's blood to create an anti-evil vaccine, but his brother, played by Christopher Lee as a more-than-slightly-mad scientist, is jealous of Cushing's find and steals the skeleton. Unfortunately, on his way home with his ill-gotten gains, Lee is caught in a torrential rainstorm, and . . . This is a truly frightening film, particularly in those scenes where the creature, all fleshed out, creeps through the British landscape on its way back to Cushing's house. Scenes like these are what horror films are all about.

Horror Express (Media) is another turn-of-the-century piece featuring Cushing and Lee that, for some reason, has never received the kind of attention it deserves. Here, Lee is the slightly demented scientist who discovers, in the mountains of China, a frozen body that appears to be that of the missing link. He boxes it carefully and takes it aboard the Trans-Siberian Express where, of course, the thing soon melts and returns to life.

This sounds like an over-worked idea, but the real plot of *Horror Express* is quite intricate. The body of the primitive beast is host to an alien intelligence, trapped on Earth millions of years before, who can take over the form of any living creature. The alien can also suck the knowledge from any human brain, though of course the victim dies in the process, with his eyes boiled white, and his brain destroyed. Soon, Lee and his fellow-scientist Cushing discover that passengers on the train

are dying mysteriously, and they trace the killings back to the escaped monster. But, when the beast is killed, the alien simply moves on to inhabit another person. Lee and Cushing must try to find out which of their fellow-passengers is really the deadly-creature in human form.

The film is full of wonderful and terrifying scenes. In one marvelous sequence, a band of Cossacks, led by the sadistic Kazan (played with joyful brutality by Telly Savalas) comes on board the train to deal with the murders. The alien, now in the form of a Rasputinlike monk, kills the entire troop by sucking their brains dry, then brings them back to life again as blind, blood-stained zombies, to chase down Lee and Cushing. *Horror Express* is so intricately formed and so complicated that, if you don't watch carefully, you can lose track of what is going on. But the film is definitely worth the effort.

Like *Daughters of Darkness*, **Blue Sunshine** (Vestron), made in 1977, is one of those films that everybody talks about but that hardly anyone has seen. The movie, written and directed by Jeff Lieberman, deals with a group of Stanford graduates, former hippies who have turned yuppies since the late sixties. All of them trip out on a batch of LSD called "Blue Sunshine" back in the good old days, and after ten years or so "Blue Sunshine" causes genetic damage that makes a person's hair fall out and eventually turns him or her into a raving murderous maniac.

The film focuses on Jerry, a burn-out victim of the sixties who hasn't managed to keep up with his yuppie friends in California but who is smart enough to notice that people around him are beginning to go stark raving mad. Fortunately, Jerry went to Cornell, so he was never exposed to "Blue Sunshine," but he soon figures out what is going on and tries to track down those people who took that particular form of acid before they go on the rampage.

Director Lieberman builds incredible tension in this film with frightening shots of left-over sixties junkies and bizarre street characters who may be victims of "Blue Sunshine" or simply victims of our society and its drug culture. Even Jerry, the hero, is weird enough to be pretty scary sometimes. The most amaz-

ing sequence is shot in a shopping mall (a locale that George Romero would use to good advantage two years later in *Dawn of the Dead*) where Jerry stalks and is stalked by a huge former football player and "Blue Sunshine" looney. All things considered, *Blue Sunshine* may be one of the best sci/horror films ever made.

In a lighter vein, there are at least three funny, off-beat, and bizarre films that seem to be available for viewing only on videocassettes.

Basket Case (Media), made in 1982, is the kind of honest-to-goodness "B" movie you thought they stopped making in 1959. The production values are terrible, the sound is bad, the acting is sub-standard—and the film is thoroughly enjoyable. Written and directed by Frank Henenlotter, the movie is dedicated to Herschell Gordon Lewis, the king of the "B's," who gave us *Blood Feast*, *2,000 Maniacs*, and other fun-filled atrocities. Clearly, Henenlotter knows where his roots are.

The plot involves Siamese twin brothers who were separated at age twelve. One is now a handsome young man named Dwayne. The other is a lump with something like



A hair-razing scene from *Blue Sunshine*.



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George Sanders brings a certain fiendish grace to *Psychomania*.

a face, razor sharp teeth, and claws, and a rather twisted sense of morality. Dwayne arrives in New York City from upstate, carrying his brother in a wicker basket, and the lump proceeds to take revenge on Doctors Kutter and Needleman (!?) who performed the separation some years before in an unsuccessful attempt to kill off the beastly brother whom the father never really liked anyway. The lump is really the brains of the outfit, and Dwayne's loyalty to his brother is admirable, but the two begin to argue when Dwayne becomes interested in a girl, and from that point on, their relationship becomes as strained as the plot of this film.

If it took itself seriously, *Basket Case* would be dreadful. Fortunately, Honenlotter knows exactly what he is doing here. The movie is full of outlandish scenes, like those in which Dwayne dumps bag after bag of fast-food burgers into his brother's basket and smiles as the lump slurps them down. And there are plenty of purposely stupid jokes. Dwayne introduces himself as a Siamese twin and is told: "Funny, you don't look Oriental." There is some gruesome stuff in this movie, so it isn't for everyone, but it definitely has its own special brand of charm.

Along the same lines, **Microwave Massacre** (Midnight Video) is a seldom-seen mad-slasher parody

starring deadpan comedian Jackie Vernon. Directed by Wayne Berwick in 1983, the film features Vernon as a mild-mannered, middle-aged construction worker whose wife insists upon fixing gourmet dishes in her new microwave oven. But Vernon just wants some good old American grub: "I wake up in the middle of the night, screaming for food I can eat with my hands." Finally, in a drunken rage, he beats her to death with a salt shaker (and tosses a pinch of salt over his shoulder to prevent bad luck). In the morning, he remembers nothing and is shocked to find his wife stuffed into her gigantic microwave. In an attempt to get rid of the body, he cooks it, cuts it up, and puts it in the freezer in the garage. Later, while searching for a late-night snack in the dark, he accidentally (???) defrosts one of the hands and nibbles on it. It tastes so good that he doesn't even pretend to be shocked. "I might have underestimated May's taste," he says.

Needless to say, more victims follow, and Vernon gets something of a reputation as a chef when he shares some of his snacks with the guys at work. This is a very funny film—if you think cannibalism is funny—and Jackie Vernon makes it work with his endless string of throw-away gags ("You remind me of my mother-in-law ... at her funeral")

and his deadpan delivery.

Basket Case and *Microwave Massacre* are bizarre and, yes, rather tasteless films that are played strictly for laughs. On the other hand, it's hard to tell whether **Psychomania** (Media) is trying to be funny or not, though, in the end, it probably doesn't matter. *Psychomania* is a British film made in 1972 that used to show up now and then on late-night tv but hasn't been around for several years. It has perhaps the most outlandish premise of any horror film ever made.

For one thing, the title *Psychomania* has nothing to do with what happens on the screen. *Cyclemania* would have been a better name for this flick, given that the central character, Tom, leads a British motorcycle gang called, appropriately enough, The Living Dead. Tom is a strange young man. His mother, a dabbler in the occult, is even stranger, and the family butler, played with satanic elegance by the late George Saunders, may be the incarnation of the Devil himself.

Tom, like any good motorcycle hoodlum, has a death wish, but, on the other hand, he would also like to live forever—hence, the poor boy's confusion. He manages to solve both problems, however, when he overhears his mother say that the secret to eternal life is to fully believe, at the moment of death, that one will come back again. Tom has a lot of faith in his mother, so he immediately drives his bike off a bridge, believing that he can return from the dead.

And—what do you know?—he does. Tom's gang is surprised to see him again, and they are thrilled to learn that, once you die and come back, you can't die a second time. So, in the wildest sequence of the film, the gang members drive into oncoming trucks, dive out of airplanes without parachutes, et cetera. A few lose faith at the last moment and don't make it back; but the majority live up to their gang name to become the real Living Dead.

Ridiculous, right? Well, it would be, except that the performances in this film are so energetic that the ludicrous plot actually works. The film is full of tight-lipped, tongue-in-cheek British humor and just enough honest enthusiasm to make it a truly enjoyable experience. ■

YELLOW JACKET SUMMER

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bathroom ... and he talked to somebody in here ... I didn't hear anybody answer him ..."

And then Carla understood why.

A corpse sat before the tv. The man was long-dead—many months, at least—and he was nothing but a red clay husk with a grinning, eyeless face.

"GET 'EM, MASE!" the boy wailed, as he tore away from Carla's grip. She struck with the clay blade, caught him across the throat but not enough to stop him. He shrieked and jumped like a top gone berserk.

Yellow jackets began streaming from the corpse's eyesockets, from the cavity where the nose had been, from the straining, terrible mouth. They came up from their burrowed nest by the thousands, and they spoke in one voice. The boy was laughing and capering, and Carla thought for an instant that he was just a puppet on strings, that whatever had gathered here to brood and wait had found good use of him.

She whirled around, picked up Trish under one arm and shouted, "Come on!" to Joe. Then she raced toward the van, where thousands more yellow jackets were stirring, starting to fly up and merge into a yellow-and-black striped wall.

She didn't stop. She braced for the pain, thrust her hand into the midst of the buzzing mass, and frantically dug for the door handle.

They covered her hand. Plunged their stingers deep as if directed by a single, malevolent intelligence. She howled with pain, but she stood her ground. The sea of yellow jackets flowed up her forearm, over her elbow and toward her shoulder, stinging all the way.

Her fingers closed around the handle. She got the right door open as the yellow jackets jabbed at her shoulder, neck and face. Both Trish and Joe were sobbing with pain, but all she could do was throw them bodily into the van. She grabbed up handfuls of yellow jackets and crushed them like writhing nettles between her fingers, then she struggled in and slammed the door.

But there were still dozens inside. Enraged, Joe attacked them with his comic book, took off one sneaker and used that as a weapon, too. His face

was covered with stings, both eyes swollen into fierce slits.

Carla started the engine. Used the windshield wipers to brush a crawling mat of the insects aside. And through the windshield she saw the boy, his arms uplifted, yellowjackets clinging to his skull and covering his shirt, blood leaking from the gash across his neck.

Their eyes met. He held her for a few seconds, like a glimpse of a fire-eyed pagan king standing on the edge of a wild empire.

Carla heard herself roar like a beast. She sank her foot to the floorboard.

The Voyager leaped forward through the storm of yellow jackets.

**The light
was almost
gone, just
a little shard
of red-hot
sun breaking
through when
the mass
of yellow
jackets
shifted.**

Toby saw, and tried to leap aside. But his twisted, hideous face told Carla he knew he was a step too late.

The van hit him, knocking him flat. Carla swerved the wheel violently to the right and felt a tire wobble as it crunched over Toby's body. Then she was away from the pumps and speeding through Capshaw with Joe hammering at yellow jackets inside the van.

"We made it!" she shouted, though the voice from her mangled lips did not sound human anymore. "We made it!"

The van streaked on. The treads of the right front tire were matted with scarlet, yellow and black.

The odometer rolled off the miles, and through the slit of her left eye Carla kept watching the gas gauge's needle as it vibrated over the E. But she did not let up on the accelerator,

taking the van around the sudden curves so fast it threatened to fly off the road into the woods. Joe killed the last of the yellow jackets, and then he sat numbly in the back, holding Trish close.

Finally, pavement returned to the road and they came out of the Georgia pines at a three-way intersection. A sign said *Halliday* ... 9. Carla sobbed with relief and shot the van through the intersection at seventy miles an hour.

One mile passed. A second, a third and a fourth. The Voyager started up hill—and Carla felt the engine kick.

"Oh ... God," she whispered. Her hands, clamped to the steeringwheel, were inflamed and horribly swollen. "No ... no ..."

The engine stuttered. The van's forward progress began to slow.

"NO!" she screamed, throwing herself against the wheel in an effort to keep the van going. But the speedometer's needle was falling fast, and then the stuttering engine went silent.

The van had enough steam left to make the top of the hill, and it rolled to a halt about fifteen feet from the declining side. "Wait here!" Carla said. "Don't move!" She got out, staggered on swollen legs to the rear of the van and put her weight against it, trying to shove it over the hill. The van resisted her. "Please ... please," she begged, and kept pushing.

Slowly, inch by inch, the Voyager started rolling forward.

She heard a distant droning noise, and she dared to look back.

About four or five miles away, the sky had turned dark. What resembled a massive, yellow-and-black-streaked thundercloud was rolling over the woods, bending the pine trees before it.

Sobbing, Carla looked down the long hill that descended in front of the van. At its bottom was a wide S-curve, and off in the green forest were the roofs of houses and buildings.

The droning noise was getting louder. Early twilight was falling.

She heard the muscles of her shoulders crack as she strained against the van. A shadow fell upon her.

The van rolled closer to the decline; then it started rolling on its own, and Carla hobbled after it, grabbed the open door and swung herself up into the seat just as it picked up real speed. She gripped the wheel, and she told her children to hang on.

What sounded like hail started pelting the roof.

The van hurtled down the hill, as the sun went dark in the middle of yellow jacket summer. ■

The sky darkens.
The air grows chill.
Wolves howl as the full moon rises.
It's time for...

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